

Men-at-Arms

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The Spanish Tercios 1536–1704



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INTRODUCTION



Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba (1453–1515), a Spanish veteran of the final campaigns of the Reconquista, was given the title of the ‘Great Captain’ at the battle of Atella in July 1496 by Neapolitan soldiers, who saw how their king and nobles relied upon his counsel. His historic victory at Cerignola on 25 April 1503 was achieved by a counter-attack from a defensive position. This was contrary to the medieval idea that still reigned in most of Europe, whereby success was to be gained by gallant cavalry charges and massive assaults by pikemen. Córdoba’s versatile generalship was underlined on 29 December 1503 by another victory, at the Garigliano – a victory achieved by skillful preparatory engineering work, allowing an audacious surprise attack across the swollen river. (Spanish Army Museum, Toledo)

‘**E**veryone fought, from the Duke of Alba, a Spanish grandee, to Pizarro, a swineherd.

They all fought: noblemen and labourers, shepherds and burghers, scholars and magnates, clergymen and rogues, clerks and knights. Every region of Spain sent its sons to fight. Garcilaso, Ercilla, Cetina, Alcázar, Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Calderón fought. An entire people fought, without differences of class, loyalty, duty, profession or wealth.

They fought over the Andes and in the Alpine foothills, on the plains of the Po and on the Mexican plateau; beside the Tiber against the Pope, and beside the Mapocho against Arauco; on the banks of the River Plate and the Danube, the Elbe and the Tagus, the Orinoco and the Escalda; at Pavia and Cuzco, in the Alpujarras and in the Amazon jungles, in Tunisia and in Amberes, in the Gulf of Lepanto and off the English coast, at Navarino and Terceira, in La Goleta and La Habana, in Algeria and in the Philippines, in Lombardy and in Naples; at all four points of the compass in France, from Provence to Brittany, from the banks of the Bidassoa to the banks of the Marne and from Rousillon to Normandy; in the Netherlands, in Portugal, in Africa and in Ireland...

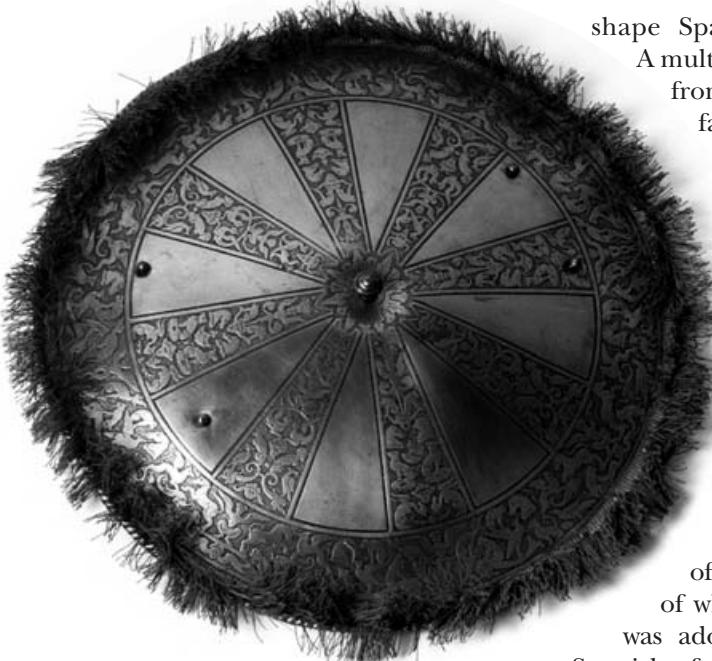
(Claudio Sánchez Albornoz, *España, un enigma histórico*)

The Ordinances of the 1490s

In January 1492 Granada, the last Muslim enclave on the Iberian Peninsula, surrendered to the ‘Catholic Monarchs’ Ferdinand and Isabella. In the varied terrain of a peninsula cut by mountain ranges, the infantry had always been a fundamental element of the Christian armies; unlike the case in the rest of Europe, they had never ceded the predominant role to the heavy armoured cavalry.

Several years before this successful conclusion of the *Reconquista*, contingents of Swiss soldiers had arrived in Castile to serve not only as mercenaries, but also as instructors in a new form of fighting that was particularly effective against heavy cavalry. Renowned throughout the continent, the Swiss infantry fought in dense formations of pikes, not only on the defensive but also manoeuvring in the attack, supported by small numbers of crossbowmen and handgunners. The successful employment of these tactics required strict discipline and training, to harness the individual fighting men into a co-ordinated group.

With the end of the *Reconquista*, the opening up of new fronts in Italy – which would be, for generations, the cockpit of Franco-Spanish rivalry – permitted the Spanish monarchy to realize an old dream: the creation of a standing army, backed by regional militia. For this purpose legal decrees known as ‘ordinances’ were issued, and these began to



A finely decorated and fringed example of a buckler. Used at the turn of the 15th to 16th centuries by the escudados who made up one-third of the Spanish infantry, bucklers were later discarded except for particular types of actions – assaults on or the defence of fortifications, and other occasions of hand-to-hand fighting both on land and at sea. (In the Imperial armies a minority of sword-and-buckler men still had a place in infantry tactics well into the 1630s.) Some Spanish bucklers bore engraved decoration of the Pillars of Hercules with the Latin motto *Plus Ultra* ('Further Still') – the national symbol of Spain, signifying that the king's power extended from Europe out across the 'Ocean Sea'. (Spanish Army Museum)

shape Spain's emerging military organization.

A multitude of details were now to be regulated, from the fines to be paid by towns that failed to provide the necessary arms, to the accounts that were to be kept by the armies.

The 1493 Ordinance defined the *capitanía* (the future company) as the basic infantry unit; it was to be commanded by a captain, seconded by a lieutenant who was also the standard-bearer. The company was divided into 'squadrongs' (from *cuadrado*, 'squared'), led by sergeants or *cuadilleros*. Initially the numbers in these companies were not fixed.

The 1497 campaign, against the army of Roussillon, saw the embryonic creation of what would become the Tercios; the pike was adopted in important numbers, and the Spanish footsoldiers were divided into three

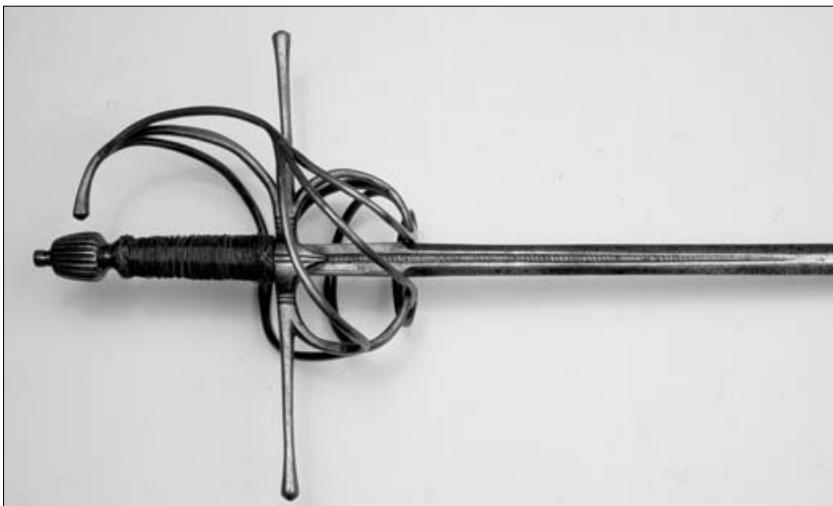
categories. One-third of the infantry carried pikes; one-third bore the old name of *escudados* (sword-and-buckler men); and the final one-third consisted of crossbowmen and handgunners. The adoption of a cuirass to protect the pikemen had already been regulated in an ordinance of two years previously. The task of the sword-and-buckler men was to try to reach the enemy, making their way through the mass of their own and the enemy pikemen. Meanwhile, support would be provided by the marksmen with missile weapons, although crossbows were at first more trusted than the fairly primitive firearms of the day.

The sword-and-buckler men had a major impact during the first Italian campaign against the French in 1494–98, when they won the battle of Atella practically singlehanded. Protected by their shields, they cut their way into the mass of King Charles VIII's hired Swiss pikemen, breaking up their formation and putting the famous mercenaries to flight. The subsequent North African campaigns (1509–11), and above all the renewed Italian wars (1501–04, and 1521–26), served as experimental laboratories for Spanish military reforms. During these conflicts, which coincided with the extension of military science during the Renaissance, Spanish military organization evolved from a medieval to a modern form.

'El Gran Capitán' and the Italian Wars

One of the chief promoters of reform was Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, 'the Great Captain'. The Catholic Monarchs gave this veteran the command of the Spanish expeditionary corps that travelled to Italy to fight against a French invasion, in support of King Ferrante of Naples.

At Seminara (28 July 1495), Córdoba disagreed with the Neapolitan nobility's eagerness to go into battle against the French, as he was aware of the enemy's superiority, but he had no option but to agree. Mistaking a tactical withdrawal by the Spanish horsemen for a retreat, the Italian infantry gave way to panic and fled the battlefield. Only the Spanish



A 16th-century Spanish sword with *gavilanes* or ‘bows’ at the hilt, providing greater protection to the hand; a skilled swordsman could even use them to catch and snap the blade of his opponent. The sturdy, two-edged blades of such weapons measured between 35.5in and 40in (90–105 centimetres). As time passed the sword hilts used by officers and wealthy soldiers became even more complex in design, and styles spread across Europe. (Spanish Army Museum)

infantry formation stood firm, before beginning an orderly retreat under pressure from Swiss pikemen and French heavy cavalry *gensdarmes*. This event exemplifies one aspect of the reputation earned by Spanish infantry over the coming centuries – their imperturbability. Ignoring everything around them, the Spaniards managed to retreat from the field of Seminara in good order, protected by their pikes from any approaching enemy. The French, content to have taken the ground, decided not to contest their withdrawal.

From then on, free from interference, Córdoba assumed command of operations, and began to lay the foundations of future Spanish military doctrine. The central characteristic of what would be known as ‘war in the Spanish mode’ was watchfulness and realism; Córdoba would fight only when it was in his interest to do so, never when it would favour the enemy, so his troops gained experience and confidence. He also employed mixed troops and tactics in ways long familiar to Spanish commanders: ‘He agreed to... set up ambushes for the French cavalry in the way used in Spain against the Moors, a true novelty for the people there’. A main tenet of his doctrine was: ‘Never bring your warriors to battle unless you are sure of their hearts and know that they are fearless and orderly; never test them if you do not see that they expect to win’ (*Inspección de Infantería, La infantería...*).

Additionally, his infantry were extremely mobile; the varied terrain favoured them and placed the French heavy cavalry at a disadvantage. This mobility allowed the Spanish to give the impression that they were everywhere, repeatedly surprising enemy garrisons. All these factors, together with the massive use of artillery to take strongholds so as to avoid long sieges, changed the face of the campaign.

His experience in the Kingdom of Naples encouraged Córdoba to organize *coronelías*, field commands inspired by the Roman legions. He ordered that each *capitanía* should consist of 500 men: 200 pikemen, 200 sword-and-buckler men, and 100 arquebusiers with firearms. Ten mixed companies, plus another two of pikemen alone, formed a *coronelía* commanded by a *coronel* (colonel), with a total of 6,000 men. This would also have two attached cavalry squadrons, one with 300 ‘men-at-arms’ (heavy cavalry) and the other with 300 ‘horsemen’ (light cavalry).

Two *coronelías* made up an army, led by a *capitán general* (commander-in-chief). However, two points should be understood. Firstly, these numbers were only theoretical, and were unlikely to be achieved in practice due to recruiting problems, desertion, and attrition during campaigns. Secondly, this organization was not inflexible; the *capitanías* could be concentrated or could operate separately, according to the requirements of particular operations.

The next Italian (or Neapolitan) war would further refine the new ways of fighting. On 23 April 1503, at Cerignola, Fernández de Córdoba crushed a French army and won a resounding victory by the massed use of firearms from behind obstacles created on carefully chosen terrain. Outnumbered by the French and Swiss led by the Duke of Nemours, Córdoba emplaced his 6,000 men on a hillside protected by ditches and palisades. A disastrous powder explosion robbed Córdoba of the use of his artillery from the outset, and the French heavy cavalry and Swiss pikemen attacked with support from their own cannon. Nevertheless, volley-fire from the Spanish arquebusiers reduced the attackers to confusion, and was followed by a devastating counter-attack by Córdoba's Landsknecht mercenaries, Spanish infantry and cavalry.

* * *

Although the Great Captain died in 1515, the military 'school' that he had developed survived him, and was to triumph again during the war of 1521–26 in the north of Italy and south of France. King Charles I of Spain (r.1516–58), now simultaneously the Emperor Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire, unleashed a climactic struggle against King Francis I of France, and two battles of far-reaching importance were fought during the first of the four successive Habsburg-Valois wars in Italy.

The first was at Bicocca (27 April 1522), where a combined Spanish-Imperial-Papal army was commanded by Prospero Colonna, a former second-in-command to Fernández de Córdoba. The outnumbered Colonna entrenched his army in much the same way as his mentor had at Cerignola, and Marshal de Lautrec's French, Swiss and Venetians attacked it in much the same way. An impatient assault by the Swiss was bloodily repulsed, some 3,000 of them being shot down by the Spanish

The wall-hook under the barrel suggests that this 16th-century arquebus is of early manufacture, and its simplicity and plain finish identify it as a military weapon. Throughout the period civilian firearms, e.g. for hunting, were better finished and often richly decorated, so cost much more than those ordered in bulk by the Spanish authorities.

(Spanish Army Museum)



arquebusiers. This defeat more or less put an end to the myth of Swiss supremacy on the battlefield.

French and Imperial armies met again at Pavia on 24 February 1525. A stalemate between the two emplaced armies was broken by an Imperial outflanking manoeuvre on a stormy night, and despite King Francis' gallant leadership of cavalry charges the Spanish arquebusiers were again decisive (this was an arm in which the French were weak). Imperial casualties were about 1,000; the French lost some 8,000 men including many nobles, and King Francis was among those taken prisoner. A new epoch of professional soldiering had begun. Guillaume de Bonnivet, who was killed at Pavia, had said of his opponents: 'I can only say that the 5,000 Spaniards seem to be 5,000 men-at-arms, and 5,000 light cavalry, and 5,000 infantrymen, and 5,000 sappers – and 5,000 devils supporting them' (*Inspección de Infantería, La infantería...*).

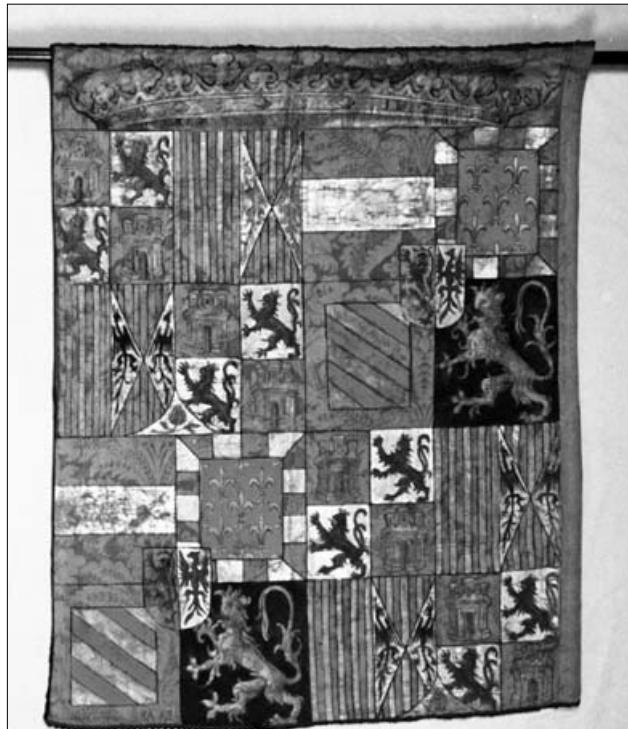
It was against this formative background in the previous generation that the true Tercios would be created.

'A corps of invincible order'

The Spanish Tercios were only ever a part of the army of the Spanish Crown, but the heaviest burden of battle would frequently fall on their shoulders. Following the maxim of Antonio de Leyva in the Pavía campaign: 'The Spanish companies should never be deployed to guard the city, but should be kept together in a corps of invincible order, reserved for uncertain, difficult and harsh exploits of war' (Pierre de Bourdeille, *Gentilezas...*).

During Alba's campaign in Flanders (1568–73) the Tercios represented only between 8 per cent and 20 per cent of his total troops; the others came from the 'Army of Nations' – Walloons, Italians, Germans, and to a lesser extent Irish and other mercenaries. These proportions would change little over the years; in 1621, for example, of the 47 Tercios (Spanish, Walloon and Italian) or regiments (German, Burgundian and Irish), only seven – 14 per cent – were Spanish.

Despite the wealth of the empire, in time the Spanish monarchy would prove to lack sufficient means to maintain operations on four continents. Problems of recruitment would lead to the enlistment of unsuitable material, including vagabonds and criminals; this, and constant financial difficulties, would lead to the repeated undermining of discipline by the threat of mutiny. Subsequent reforms would only serve to slow down this creeping decadence, not to reverse it. Consequently, at the beginning of the 18th century the new Bourbon dynasty installed by France introduced the French military system, and did away with the title 'Tercio' – thus ending a tradition dating back to the first years of the 16th century.



The heraldic arms of the Emperor Charles V, showing his European dominions: Castile, Leon, Aragon, the two Sicilies (Sicily and Naples), Granada, Austria, modern Burgundy, old Burgundy and Brabant, with Flanders and the Tyrol in the escutcheons at upper right and lower left. The amalgamation of Habsburg power in the Kingdom of Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, in the person of Charles I & V, gave a considerable boost to Spanish resources, confidence and success in the first half of the 16th century. (Spanish Army Museum)

CHRONOLOGY

1516 Charles of Austria, grandson of the Catholic Monarchs and of Emperor Maximilian, is crowned King of Spain as Charles I.

1519 King Charles is elected Holy Roman Emperor, as Charles V.

1521 Failed French invasion of Navarre (May–June). Spanish-Imperial-Papal army under Prospero Colonna captures Milan from French (23 November).

1522 Spanish arquebusiers decisive in Colonna's defeat of Marshal Lautrec at Bicocca (27 April).

1525 Spanish arquebusiers again prominent in decisive victory of Imperial generals Lannoy and Pescara over King Francis I at Pavia (23–24 February).

1526 Under short-lived Treaty of Madrid, King Francis renounces claims in Italy and cedes Burgundy, Artois and Flanders to Emperor Charles.

1526–30 Second Italian war between Francis and Charles ends with Imperial successes.

1536–38 Third Italian war ends with French gains in northern Italy.

1536 Ordinance of Genoa – ‘creation’ of the Tercios.

1542–44 Fourth Italian war ends after Imperial defeat at Ceresole (14 April 1544).

1547 During German Protestant rebellion (Schmalkaldic War), Emperor Charles decisively defeats Maurice of Saxony at battle of Mühlberg (24 April).

1556 Abdication of Charles V and separation of Habsburg possessions. Charles' brother Ferdinand succeeds him in Germany as Holy Roman Emperor; Charles' son succeeds him as King Philip II of Spain.

1557 Duke of Savoy routs Montmorency's French army at St Quentin (10 August).

1558 Count Egmont defeats Marshal des Thermes at Gravelines (13 July).

1559 Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis (3 April) ends Habsburg-Valois wars, and secures Spanish dominions in Italy for 150 years.

1567 Fernando Álvarez de Toledo, Duke of Alba (or Alva), appointed governor of Spanish Netherlands, and marches Tercios up from Italy.

1568 Start of ‘Eighty Years’ War’ for Dutch independence; William ‘the Silent’, Prince of Orange, raises rebel army in northern Netherlands. Rebels win small battle of Heiligerles (23 May), but routed by Alba at Jemmingen (21 July).

1569–72 Alba’s occupation is largely effective by land, but rebel maritime ‘Sea Beggars’ skilfully harass Spanish communications, trade and coastal towns.

1572–73 Renewed uprising drives Spanish out of most of northern Netherlands. Alba recaptures many cities and carries out harsh reprisals, before resigning command in November 1573.

1575–78 Netherlands revolt spreads. Unpaid Spanish troops sack Antwerp (October 1576). Spanish reinforcements under Alexander Farnese recover much territory; Farnese appointed



Map showing some of the major battles fought by the Spanish Tercios during the wars of the Spanish monarchy and Habsburg Empire in the 16th and 17th centuries.

viceroy in October 1578.

1579–89 William of Orange appointed Stadtholder of republican United Provinces of northern Netherlands. Against complex political background, repeated campaigns by Farnese restore Spanish control over much territory. William of Orange assassinated (10 July 1584), and succeeded by son Maurice of Nassau. After his capture of Antwerp (17 August 1585), Farnese becomes Duke of Parma.

1580–89 Spanish-Portuguese War, ending with Philip II securing throne of Portugal (which will remain under Spanish rule until 1640).

1588 The *Grande y Felicísima Armada* ('Spanish Armada') fails in attempt to embark Parma's army to invade England.

1589–99 After Parma is withdrawn to command in France, Maurice of Nassau's repeated offensive campaigns retake northern Netherlands; defeat of Spanish under Count Varas at Turnhout (24 January 1597).

1598 Philip III succeeds his father on throne of Spain. During his reign, peace with France and England is achieved.

1600 Maurice defeats Spanish army under Archduke Albert at battle of Nieuwpoort (2 July) but is unable to exploit his victory. Sieges and desultory field campaigns continue.

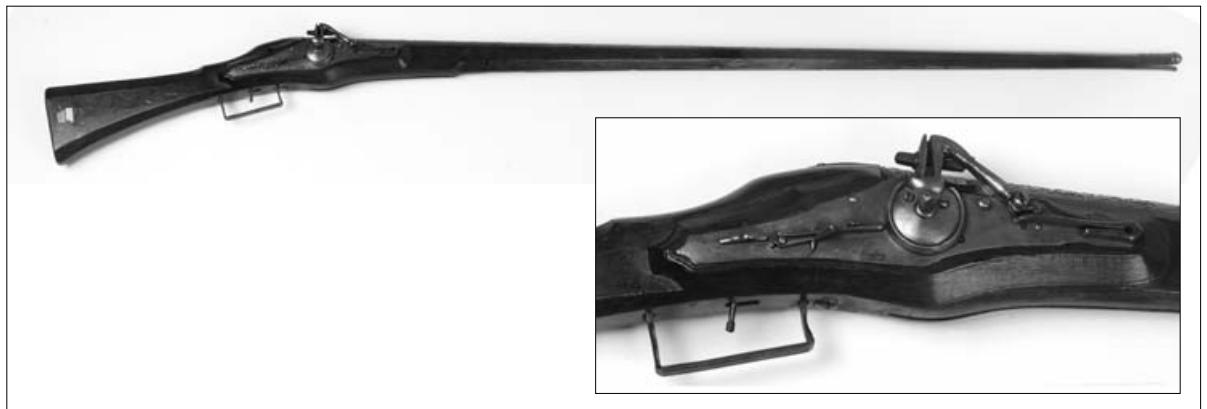
1609 Both sides in Dutch war of independence are exhausted, and conclude the Twelve Years' Truce.

The Thirty Years' War, 1618–48:

1620 Spanish army under Marquis of Spinola marches from Flanders to the Palatinate to intervene on side of Catholic League.

1621 Philip IV succeeds to Spanish throne. Twelve Years' Truce ends.

1625 In Netherlands, Spinola takes Breda (5 June) after year-long siege.



A wheellock infantry weapon.
Invented in the early 16th century, this system employed a wind-up 'clockspring' mechanism; when released by the trigger, a serrated metal wheel revolved against a piece of pyrites, sending sparks into the priming pan. Wheellocks were used until the end of the 17th century, and pistols and carbines were widely issued to cavalry for several generations. Their advantages were safety, and concealment at night, since they did away with the burning matchcord and could be carried loaded and ready to fire. But they were much more complex and thus more costly than matchlocks, so their use by infantrymen was limited to some wealthy officers. (Spanish Army Museum)

<p>1634</p> <p>1640</p> <p>1641–44</p> <p>1643</p> <p>1648</p> <p>1653–57</p> <p>1657–58</p> <p>1657–68</p> <p>1659</p> <p>1665</p> <p>1667–68</p> <p>1689</p> <p>1701</p> <p>1704</p>	<p>Victory of Spanish-Imperial army over Swedes at Nordlingen (6 September).</p> <p>Uprisings against Spanish throne in Catalonia and Portugal.</p> <p>Spanish-Portuguese War ends in negotiations after Portuguese victory at Montijo (May 1644).</p> <p>Duke of Enghien's French army defeats Spanish Army of Flanders at battle of Rocroi (19 May).</p> <p>Most European powers, exhausted, conclude Peace of Westphalia (24 October), but Spain and France fight on.</p> <p>Spanish army under Condé manoeuvres against Turenne in northern France.</p> <p>Franco-British alliance. Turenne decisively defeats army of Condé and Spanish viceroy Don John of Austria at 'Battle of the Dunes' outside Dunkirk (14 June 1658).</p> <p>Another Spanish-Portuguese War ends with Spanish recognition of Portuguese independence.</p> <p>Peace of the Pyrenees marks end of Spanish supremacy in Europe, and rise of France under King Louis XIV.</p> <p>King Philip IV of Spain is succeeded by Charles II.</p> <p>War of Devolution. Louis XIV claims Spanish Netherlands, and Spanish suffer defeats in Flanders and Franche Comté.</p> <p>France declares war on Spain (April) during War of the Grand Alliance/ Nine Years' War (1688–97) against most other European powers. French operations in Catalonia (1693–94).</p> <p>After death of King Charles II without an heir, Louis XIV installs his grandson on Spanish throne as Philip V. Outbreak of War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14) between Spain and France on one side, and the anti-French Grand Alliance.</p> <p>Army reforms of Philip V include disbandment of the Tercios and their transformation into regiments.</p>
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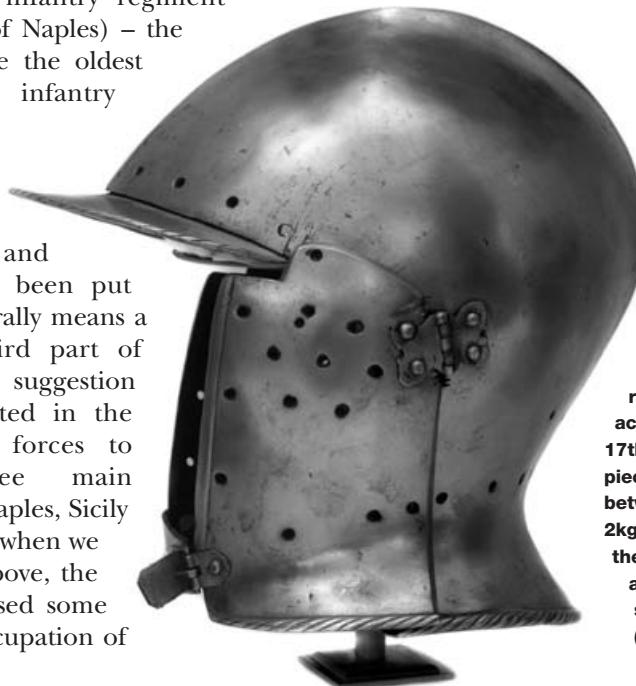
'THE OLD TERCIOS'

Traditionally, the Ordinance issued in Genoa by Emperor Charles V in 1536 has been considered the document by which the *tercios* were created. However, the reference to Tercios in the Ordinance states: 'The Spanish infantry of the Tercio of Naples and Sicily in our army have been paid until the end of September this year, and those of the Tercio of Lombardy until mid-October this year, and the soldiers of the Tercio of Malaga who stayed in Nice, and the company from Jaen that serves in our army, until 25 October'. Therefore, this ordinance did not mark the birth of the Tercios, but simply recognized – under a term which had become official over time – units that had already been formed.

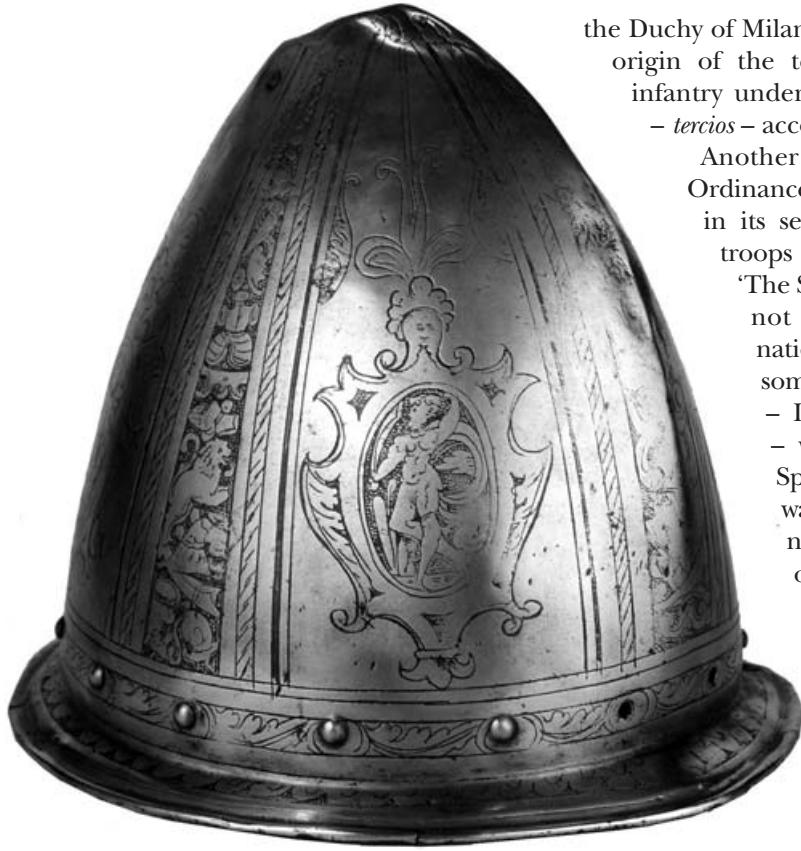
'Tercio' as the title of a military unit may have been used first in 1509 for the Tercio of Zamudio (its commander's name), which became the Tercio of Naples in 1513. Similarly, the Tercio of Sicily was created in 1534 with forces employed in the North African campaign against the Berbers and Turks; and two years later the Tercio of Lombardy was formed in the recently acquired Italian territory of the Duchy of Milan. Eventually these three units became known as the *Tercios Viejos* ('Old Tercios') of the Spanish infantry; they were the original formations, and had permanent standing. On the other hand, the Tercio of Malaga (or of Nice, as it was named after it had garrisoned that city) did not have permanent standing, and subsequently received several names.

The unofficial title of 'Old Tercio' came to have such proud significance that it was usurped by later units, and to differentiate them from these later foundations the original Tercios became known as the *Grandes Tercios Viejos* ('Great Old Tercios'), for purely emotive reasons. It should be noted that infantry regiments tracing their identity to the original Tercios Viejos still serve in the Spanish Army today: the mountain light infantry regiment 'Tercio Viejo de Sicilia' No. 67, the infantry regiment 'del Príncipe' No. 3 (Tercio of Lombardy), and the infantry regiment 'Soria' No. 9 (Tercio of Naples) – the latter considered to be the oldest continuously existing infantry regiment in the world.

The origin of the term *tercio* for a military unit is not precisely known, and various theories have been put forward (the word literally means a bundle, or a one-third part of something). A logical suggestion that the term originated in the division of Spanish forces to garrison the three main possessions in Italy – Naples, Sicily and Milan – falls down when we recall that, as noted above, the term had first been used some 20 years before the occupation of



The burgonet, a style of helmet that combined good protection with visibility, was used widely by horsemen but also by armoured infantry. It first appeared in Italy and Germany in c.1510, and in developed forms it would remain in widespread use across Europe until the late 17th century. The 16th-century pieces like this example weighed between 2.6lb and 4.4lb (1.2 to 2kg), and from c.1520 onwards they might have various arrangements of hinged sidepieces for face protection. (Spanish Army Museum)



Both period and modern terms for types of helmet, which vary from country to country, can be confusing. The Spanish word *morion* simply means 'helmet'. Today a Spanish *morion* is sometimes assumed to be the type that appeared in Italy from c.1550 (see page 45), with a very high raised comb on a skull of pronounced 'clamshell' shape, and the brim swept upwards at front and back. In fact, the photo above shows a finely decorated example of the true 'Spanish *morion*', which evolved from the *cabaceta* in Castile at the end of the 15th century, and was the type most widely used by 16th-century pikemen and some arquebusiers. Its main characteristics are the 'almond-shaped' skull, which sometimes terminated in a small back-swept 'stalk' at the apex ridge, and the narrow horizontal brim. (Spanish Army Museum)

the Duchy of Milan. The most likely theory finds the origin of the term in the organization of the infantry under the 1497 Ordinance into thirds – *tercios* – according to their types of weapon.

Another important aspect of the 1536 Ordinance that is frequently overlooked lies in its separation of Charles V's Imperial troops into distinct groups by nationality:

'The Spanish infantry companies should not have soldiers from any other nation, except for fifes and drums, and some soldiers at present with them
– Italians and men from Burgundy
– who have long served us in the Spanish infantry; and in the same way the Italian infantry should have no Spaniards or soldiers from any other nation, except for some Spanish ensigns and sergeants;
and the German infantry should have no Spaniards or Italians, but rather each national should serve in the companies of his own nation and not of any other.'

Therefore, except for a few previously enlisted soldiers who were

permitted to serve out their time, the citizens from the different Imperial and Spanish possessions were restricted as to the units in which they could serve. Men born in Castile or Aragon were understood to be Spaniards, but not those from the Italian possessions. (In the 17th century the Canary Islands, conquered by Castile at the end of the 15th century, would also form a part of this military structure, providing recruits and organizing levies.) The purpose of these restrictions, as the Ordinance recognizes, was to avoid fraud and to promote constructive rivalry. On many occasions these distinct unit identities indeed motivated the troops, but on others it was the cause of quarrels and problems.

UNIT ORGANIZATION

Evolution, 1536–1704

The necessary reorganization of the forces after the Italian Wars became official with the 1536 Ordinance of Genoa. From being the major unit, the *coronelía* of Córdoba's day became just one of three making up a *tercio*. Each Tercio consisted of 12 companies – ten of pikemen and two of arquebusiers. The normal *coronelía* had four companies, but it could vary in size according to operational necessities when – like a modern task group – it was deployed away from the rest of the Tercio to carry out a particular mission. In theory, each company would have around 250 men, giving the Tercio a total of 3,000; in fact, throughout their history their average strength was only about 1,500 men.

In 1560 an order was given to increase the proportion of firearms against pikes (although it was already often greater than officially stipulated). The Tercio was reduced to ten companies, eight of pikemen and two of arquebusiers, each with around 300 soldiers; however, in practice about one-third of the men in ‘pike’ companies were actually armed with arquebuses. In 1567 the Duke of Alba added 15 musketeers to each company of shot.

The Tercios that went to Flanders in 1567 were: Tercio Viejo of Naples, 3,200 men; Tercio Viejo of Lombardy, 2,200; Tercio of Sardinia, 1,600; and Tercio Viejo of Sicily, 1,600 – giving Alba a total of 8,600 men instead of the theoretical 12,000. Although understrength, however, his army was of high quality: ‘[Alba] did not wish to be served by any infantry other than the Spanish. But what an infantry! One of the most excellent ever to have gone on campaign... a corps of up to 10,000 soldiers, magnificent, well supplied, beyond all reproach... even as to their courtesans, who with their adornments appeared to be princesses’ (Pierre de Bourdeille, *Gentilezas...*).

At the beginning of the reign of Philip III (r.1598–1621), the number of companies was increased to 15 if serving in peaceful Italy, or 20 if serving elsewhere in Europe; however, the number of men in each company was reduced to 100–150. In Tercios with 15 companies, two of them, and in those with 20, three companies, were formed chiefly of arquebusiers but included 10 per cent of musketeers. The nominally ‘pike’ companies were in fact already formed of pikemen and musketeers in equal numbers. In 1632 further reforms standardized all Tercios at 15 mixed companies, each to have 90 arquebusiers, 40 musketeers, and 60 pikemen.

To support the Tercios, Philip II had created many militia units throughout the Peninsula. In 1637, during the reign of Philip IV (r.1621–65), it became necessary to draw upon these levies due to difficulties in recruitment, and these militiamen were the basis for the creation of the Provincial Tercios that were the principal element during the 1640 campaigns in Portugal and Catalonia. Each consisted of only 12 companies totalling about 1,200 men.

When Philip V ascended the throne in 1701, establishing the Bourbon dynasty in Spain, he instituted many reforms. His army had 65 Tercios, including the Provincial units, spread throughout Europe. This should have meant a theoretical total of nearly 200,000 soldiers, but in reality there were fewer than 30,000; only half of them were Spanish, and they were very short of weapons. The initial order was that each Tercio should have 12 musketeer companies and one of

Reproduction of soldiers of the principal elements of the Tercio in the early 17th century: from left to right, armoured coselete, unarmoured pica seca, and musketeer.

Soldiers received a basic wage, plus a variable sum termed the *ventaja* according to the duties they discharged. A coselete or an arquebusier/ musketeer received the same basic wage as the lowly *pica seca*, but were paid successively higher *ventajas* because of the weight of the cuirass in the former case, and the need to buy ammunition in the latter. For similar reasons, *ventajas* were added according to the responsibilities assumed by each man – e.g. the drummer, ‘for knowledge of his art’, or the captain, ‘for commanding the company’. *Ventajas* could also be granted for outstanding feats in combat. (Figures by Gerry Embleton, Time Machine; Spanish Army Museum)



Reproduction of the costume of a 17th-century musketeer of the Tercio of Savoy, with original powder flask. The expensive lace collar is a reminder that whenever they could afford to, soldiers of the period advertised their status by costly display (shirts of the day usually came with a spare collar, so it was easy for a man to 'upgrade' his appearance). (Spanish Army Museum)



grenadiers. Finally, on 28 September 1704, the monarch ordered that the unit designation was to change from 'Tercio' to 'Regiment'.

* * *

In 1537 Charles I & V had posted certain companies of soldiers from the old seagoing companies to the galleys stationed in the Mediterranean, who became the oldest marine infantry in the world. Later, Philip II founded the Tercio Nuevo of the Sea of Naples, the Tercio of the Ocean Fleet, the Tercio of Galleys of Sicily, and the Tercio Viejo of the Ocean and of Neapolitan Infantry. These, too, lost their old names in the reign of Philip V.

MILITARY RANKS & DUTIES

Like all military units, the Tercio was formed on a hierarchical structure. In descending order of seniority, the ranks were as follows:

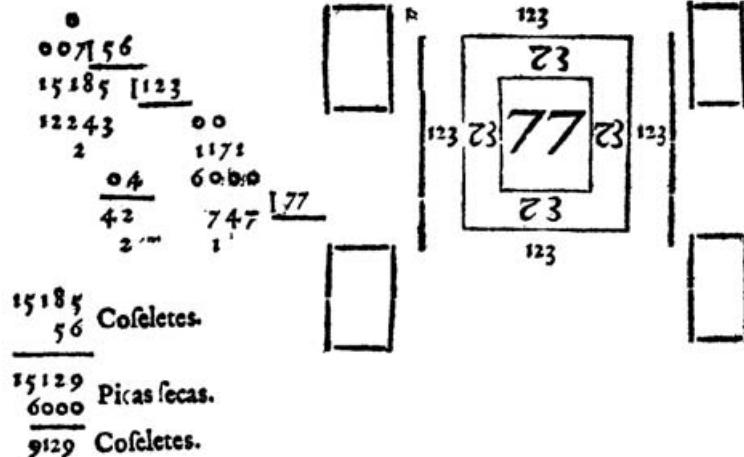
Maestre del campo (*field marshal*) Chosen by the Crown to command a new Tercio, or by the captain-general of a field army to fill a vacancy. He was to pass on the orders given by the captain-general, and to take command in the latter's absence.

His main duty was to oversee administration – particularly, the safeguarding of the prices of the soldiers' food supplies – and the application of military justice. In his judicial capacity he had to take account of morale, dealing with complaints fairly; an error in judgement – particularly when imposing the death penalty – could provoke unrest, even mutiny, especially when pay was in arrears. He had to ensure that the soldiers obeyed their officers, but also that the officers 'governed [their subordinates] without offending them, and spoke to them with respect'. He was also officially the captain of the Tercio's first company, and the corporal of a squad. This was no ordinary squad, however; many of its members were *oficiales reformados* (officers without a command), and it was more like an 'HQ platoon', consisting of expert councillors and experienced veterans. The field marshal had a personal escort of eight halberdiers, paid by the monarch.

Sergento mayor (*sergeant-major*) The second-in-command of the Tercio, he was responsible for passing on the field marshal's orders to the captains. This man had to be an experienced and respected soldier, and we might consider his work to be a combination of that of the *primus pilus* chief centurion of a Roman legion, and of a present-day executive officer (S-3, operations).

The sergeant-major had three basic duties. The first was the billeting of the soldiers, and the second the organization and implementation of troop movements. This was no simple task, as the soldiers 'generally abhorred travelling in orderly fashion ... because of the climate their character is more heated than others, and they lack patience for marching in order' (Francisco Valdés, *Espejo y arte militar*). Thirdly and most importantly, the sergeant-major was responsible for the formation of the tactical 'squadrons' for battle, for which he required some mastery of arithmetic. He had to know the precise number of his soldiers, and be able to adapt the numbers available to the various different formations

MILICIA DEL CAPITAN



QVADRO DE GENTE CON DEPO-

sito de picas secas, y arcabuzeros, ba-
gaje, y gaftadores.

Figura se que se ofrece entrar a conquistar en ferçosa ocasion en Berberia, o en otro qualquier prouincia, sin llevar ninguna cawalleria , yes te, con su tierra llana, y el enemigo se halla pujante de cawalleria , y el arcabuzero que sobrare , ni el bagaje no va seguro , yes necesario guardarlo porno perder: forçado sera ponerlo seguro, que es en el anima del esquadron , y

It is important to understand the difference in 16th- and 17th-century armies between 'administrative' units – companies and regiments – and 'tactical' units – the 'squadrons' that physically formed the battle line. This illustrates the calculations made by Capt Martin de Eguiluz to form the *cuadro de gente* ('square of men') tactical formation, as shown in his book *Milicia, Discurso y Regla Militar* – a copy of which was signed by King Philip II in 1591. Forming the Tercios into tactical squadrons was no simple matter, and the sergeant-major required a more than basic knowledge of the mathematics of the period. Consequently books such as this, with useful mathematical tables, were widely printed. (Author's collection)

that could be used (see 'Tactics', below). In recognition of his prestige, he had the privilege of not dismounting before the generals, and he was the only person able to cross the front of the squadron on horseback. As insignia of his office he carried a short wooden baton.

Capitán (*captain*) This – the most attractive rank in the public imagination – could be obtained in two ways. It could be granted either by the Supreme Council at court when authorizing the raising of a new company, or by the captain-general to fill a vacancy occurring when on campaign. Contrary to what might be imagined, it was not obligatory to be an ensign first; candidates could be ordinary soldiers, corporals or sergeants, provided that they had ten years of distinguished service on their record.

If the captain wanted the company to obey his orders he had to set an example, since 'It is more efficient to command by example than by order; the soldier prefers to keep his eye on his captain's back, rather than to have the captain's eye on his back. What is ordered is heard, [but] what is seen is imitated' (Francisco de Quevedo). The captain had to select his subordinates from among his soldiers, trying to choose the most capable and putting each in the position most suited to his physical and intellectual abilities. His badge was the *gineta*, a short polearm adorned with fringes below the head. However, when in combat captains commanding arquebusiers and musketeers carried the respective firearm, and captains commanding pikemen bore a pike or a sword and buckler.

Alfárez (*ensign, lieutenant*) The second-in-command of the company, and the captain's principal assistant. This officer had to be skilled in military



The standards, a priority target for the enemy, were protected in the centre of the formation; the alfarez who carried the company flag sometimes had a special escort of halberdiers. Many pictures of the Tercios – e.g. that of an early 17th-century parade at Ommergang – show standards carried on a short staff, with only about 12in (30cm) protruding below the silk to hold it by. While they were certainly brandished on short staffs for ceremonial purposes, other period art shows that on campaign they were mounted on longer and more practical staffs – e.g., Jan Cornelis Vermeyen's eyewitness painting of 'The Landing at La Goulette' during Charles V's 1535 Tunisian campaign. For the standard on the left in this re-enactment group, see Plate H5. (Luis Angel Cozar Collection)

affairs, but his primary responsibility was for the standard – the icon of the company's honour and reputation.

The ensign had to be physically strong, since he often had to bear the standard aloft with one hand, and – since it was a priority target for the enemy – he had to be able to use his sword at the same time. At the defeat of Heiligerles seven of the ten ensigns of the Tercio Viejo of Sardinia fell, but it was the unit's proud boast that not a single standard was lost. The ensign had several assistants to help him carry the standard. He himself bore it on parade, at the beginning and end of a march, and, of course, in battle; but on occasions when he had to accompany his men in circumstances where the standard could not be risked, it was left in the care of the assistants.

Sargento (sergeant) This rank was created in 1492 at the end of the Spanish *Reconquista*. Directly responsible for discipline in the company, the sergeant – like the sergeant-major of the whole Tercio – also had to know the precise number of men available to form the tactical squadron. He therefore had to master sufficient arithmetic to be able to draw up the ranks and files, and he

had to be literate, in order to allocate and note the billets during troop movements. He deployed the men in their exact positions according to their equipment and tactical skills, and had to supervise them constantly, grouping them in *camaradas* and organizing their training. Since his authority depended upon keeping his soldiers' respect he had to maintain a certain distance from them, and could not join in their off-duty amusements. His insignia was the halberd.

Cabo (corporal) As the sergeant's assistant, he had to give the former his support at all times. His main task was the discipline and training of his squad. He had to ensure good relations among comrades, and he was specifically to concern himself with the sick and wounded, attending to them whenever possible. He was armed like the men in his unit, although he also had a *partesana* polearm as a formal mark of rank.

* * *

The men who initially filled the ranks of the Tercios were professional soldiers who volunteered for a military career, whether permanent or temporary. As time went by, due to the constant attrition of manpower during the long wars (and also to emigration to the Americas), it became necessary to have recourse to levies. Predictably, these conscripts did not always perform as efficiently as might be desired.

The soldier usually began as a *pica seca*, armed with a pike but without armour protection. As time passed and he gained experience, he could buy himself a cuirass and become a *coselete*, thereby earning higher wages; in the same way he might progress to become an arquebusier or musketeer. If he showed the necessary qualities he might be promoted from the ranks. No minimum period was stipulated, but it was estimated to take around five years for promotion to corporal, another year to make sergeant, another two years to be considered for promotion to ensign, and three more for captain. At all stages in his service the soldier had to have the physical and moral qualities to be able to bear the hardships of campaign, and he was expected to treat civilian subjects of the Crown – particularly women – with proper respect.

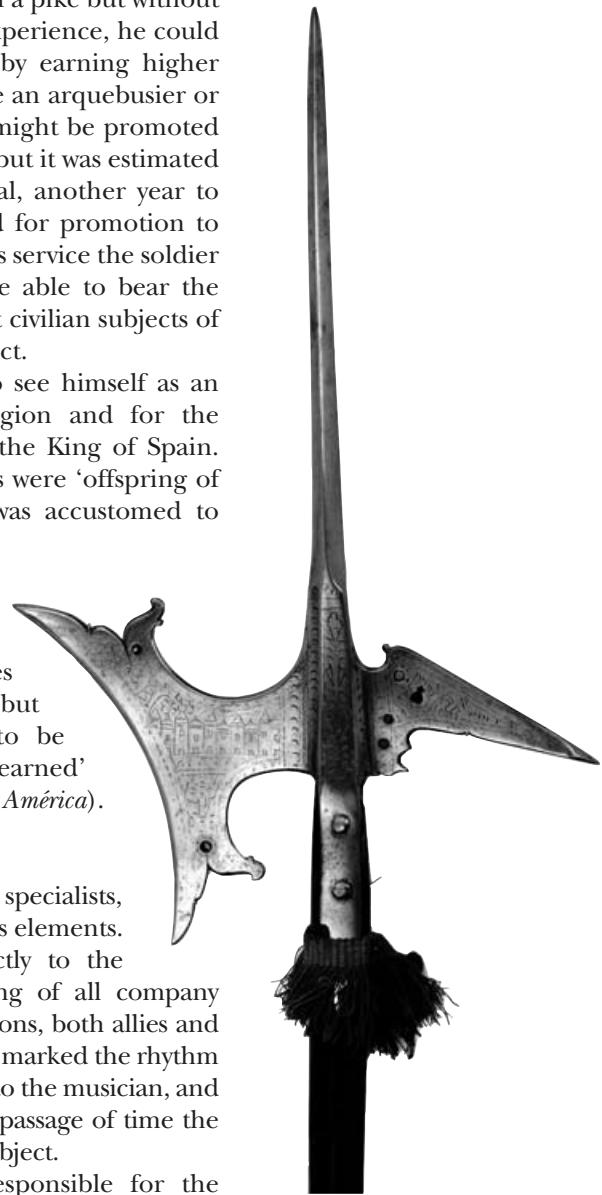
The Spanish soldier of the period was taught to see himself as an instrument for the defence of the Catholic religion and for the expansion and maintenance of the possessions of the King of Spain. Educated in the tradition of the *Reconquista*, soldiers were ‘offspring of a nation that after seven hundred years of war was accustomed to acquiring wealth by the sword. During those seven centuries, two customs had become firmly rooted in the Spaniard: through war, a man of good heart acquired wealth earlier and more honourably than a man who laboured; and the man of good heart does not rest on his laurels after acquiring his wealth, but goes on fighting, as there are always infidels to be destroyed, riches to be won and honours to be earned’ (Salvador de Madariaga, *El ocaso del imperio español en América*).

* * *

The hierarchy of the Tercio was completed by other specialists, grouped in what we would call today the headquarters elements.

The *tambor mayor* (drum major) reported directly to the sergeant-major, and was responsible for the training of all company drummers. He had to know the drumbeats of all nations, both allies and enemies. Together with the fife-players, the drummers marked the rhythm for marching. At that period the word *tambor* referred to the musician, and the instrument was called the *caja de guerra*; with the passage of time the word ‘drum’ was transferred from the person to the object.

The *furriel mayor* (quartermaster-major) was responsible for the distribution of equipment and supplies, the organization of quarters, and the necessary bookkeeping. Below him, each company had a quartermaster to perform the same duties on a lesser scale. The *barrachel* was the military provost, keeping good order in the camps with the help of his assistants. The *auditor* was the legal officer; one of his most important tasks was to validate the soldiers’ wills, which they customarily drew up before going into battle. Each Tercio had a doctor and a surgeon responsible for medical treatment, including maintaining a pharmacy, and the medical team could be completed with a ‘barber’ in each company. The spiritual welfare of the troops was the business of the chaplain-major, and each company had its own chaplain.



Halberd head. This polearm was both a symbol of rank for sergeants, and also a practical weapon used by detachments to defend deployed arquebusiers or musketeers against enemy cavalry. (Spanish Army Museum)

RECRUITING, TRAINING & LOGISTICS

Once the Crown had taken the decision to recruit new troops, captains and others aspiring to appointment or promotion had to submit their claims to the Supreme Council of War, furnishing documents signed by superior officers to certify their merits.

If promotion was granted, the new officer received a series of documents. The ‘letters patent’ recognized his new rank; the *conducta* or pass gave instructions such as the towns in Spain to which he should travel, the ages of the volunteers to be enlisted, etc.; and any necessary supplementary orders gave details such as the port of embarkation for the voyage to Italy. The captain’s first tasks were to select his junior officers, and to choose the design of his standard. He then travelled to the specified area to begin the recruitment of volunteers.

On arrival at a designated town he met with the local authorities, then raised the standard at a prominent place and beat the drums to summon attention. When curious onlookers gathered around, the officers – swaggering about in the best clothes they could afford – recounted their adventures and extolled the attractions of the military life. In theory, youths under the age of 20 were not eligible for recruitment, but in practice this was not always the case. Some lied about their age, and at the beginning of the 17th century the demand for recruits was such that many teenagers were enlisted. Even younger boys were accepted to work as porters or servants for the fighting men (but on more than one occasion these lads, too, would be obliged to take up arms).

If there was a surplus of candidates, those with weapons of their own were given preference; those without arms had to pay out of their future wages for the arms they were issued. Once the required number of recruits had been assembled, a review was carried out by officials of two types: the *veedor* (inspector), and the *pagador* (paymaster). The first had to certify that the men were fit for service, and the second advanced them a sum of travel money deducted from their first monthly wage. (This led some chancers to fill their pockets by the practice called ‘*tornillazo*’ – enlisting, collecting this advance, and then deserting; but if they were caught, they could end up on the gallows.) After the review the recruits were given a written document recognizing their status as soldiers, and began the march towards their appointed stations.

A typical journey during the 16th and much of the 17th century would take the new company to a port on the Mediterranean in order to embark for the Spanish possessions in Italy or one of the garrisons in North Africa. Once they arrived they would begin to receive instruction from their officers and the veteran soldiers; it was a basic principle in the Tercios not to send anyone on campaign until he had been properly trained to fight, although in the late 16th century new units were sometimes marched straight up to Flanders (where the veteran Tercios regarded them cynically). An important institution was the *camarada*, a group of eight to ten soldiers who lived and ate together, helping and supporting one another, and strong bonds of comradeship were naturally forged.

On arrival at their barracks, the new companies were often dissolved and their members distributed among existing companies, both to make up their numbers and to achieve the quick integration of the new arrivals into the military machine. This process, known as ‘*reforma*’, might see



This example of a *partesana* has a very long, knife-like blade; period paintings show bladed polearms with a variety of different heads. The partizan was the mark of rank for infantry corporals, but in battle such under-officers tended to use pikes or firearms like the men of their squad. (Spanish Army Museum)



Re-enactment of a *cuadro de terreno* field formation, with a 'garrison' of musketeers visible at the right. Since the effectiveness of a tactical 'squadron' depended on mass and momentum, it was vital that recruits were trained to act together promptly upon orders, so as to maintain the integrity of the formation under all circumstances. Although these re-enactors wear gear corresponding to the mid-17th century, their deployment in less than 10 ranks is typical of the later years of that century. In combat, the pikemen in the left file handled their shafts with their right arms and their comrades on the right flank used their left arms.

The relative importance of the shot element in the Tercios over the pike companies was clearly recognized by at least 1595: 'The greatest part of the victories gained at this time is obtained with artillery or the readiness of the arquebusiers with their lively volleys, disordering the squadrons of the enemy in such manner as to put them in rout' (Bernardino de Mendoza, *Theoretica y Practica de Guerra*). However, in 1634 Gerat Barry, an Irish officer in Spanish service, still recognized – in his *A Discourse of Military Discipline* – that the armoured pikeman was the strength of the formation, and that either one without the other was only half as strong. (Luis Angel Cozar Collection)

single companies or entire Tercios transferred to fill gaps in other units; it was also an opportunity to expel those who had proved undisciplined. Captains left without a command were known as '*reformados*', and were placed at the disposal of the commanders to fulfil individual missions (which might even include such special tasks as espionage in disguise) while they waited to be given a company to command.

A surviving soldier's service with the army was eventually ended by a 'licence', the document by which the authorities terminated his contract. Frequently, the licence was a way of getting rid of soldiers who had become incapacitated or whose discipline was unsatisfactory. The soldier was also entitled to request a licence himself. If this was not granted it could lead to desertion, but this was not then a capital offence, since it was merely considered as a breach of contract. Soldiers no longer able to bear the hardships of campaign because of age or wounds might hope for places in the garrisons of the forts scattered all over the Spanish possessions, but since only a few such positions were available they were hard to obtain.

Training

To keep the men in proper physical condition, foot races, ballgames, swimming and other physical activities were organized. According to a commentator of the period, the purpose of their training was: 'First, to harden the body, making it apt for the work, more agile and skilful. Second, to learn the handling of arms. And third, to obey orders' (Diego de Salazar, *De re militari*).

As in present-day armies, the new soldier was first given individual instruction, to learn how to handle his specific weapon; pike training was usually given first, although men had to be acquainted with all the standard weapons, since the hazards of war might oblige them to use any one of them. The next stage consisted of group instruction, by which the soldiers learned to fight in formation. For this purpose they practised adopting, moving in, and maintaining the formation in any situation. This tactical formation was known as the 'squadron', and was determined by the number of men available and the tactical situation. At a time when



The overland route of the 'Spanish Road', the main corridor of communication for troops and supplies from Italy up to the Spanish territories in Flanders. Depending on the exact itinerary used – which might vary according to military and diplomatic events – its length was between 620 and 745 miles (1,000 to 1,200 kilometres). On average, the Tercios took rather less than 50 days to make the journey, although in 1578 one expedition accomplished it in 32 days. The documents of the Army of Flanders contain complaints about the ragged and exhausted state of the troops arriving there, who sometimes suffered significant numbers of deaths on the march.

armies had to manoeuvre and fight in close formations it was of vital importance for each man to fulfil his duty. This was summarized, by Bernardino de Escalante in his work *Diálogos del arte militar*, in three parts: always follow the flag; always obey the officers; and always be armed and ready to form the squadron. It was recommended that the squadron be formed several times in the course of marches, to accustom the troops to adopt it at any time. To keep the men busy and alert, commanders also organized 'simulated wars' – tactical exercises – in which they practised the fighting tactics they would actually use in battle.

Logistics

The functioning of the military machine depended upon contracts issued to merchants to provide food, weapons, ammunition and all other necessary items. (The efficiency, or otherwise, with which this was accomplished depended upon the regular supply of money from the Spanish government to the armies in the field, which – as the Duke of Parma's records reveal – could by no means be guaranteed.)

Foodstuffs were provided by *vivanderos*, who could sell their produce centrally to the quartermasters, or, on payment of a fee, could set up their stalls in the camps and sell directly to the soldiers at specified prices. Arms and ammunition were supplied by the army

authorities, their cost being deducted from the soldiers' wages, but they could also be bought individually. Official contracts to supply the army with weapons stipulated the required features, date and place of delivery, and even a warranty period during which the supplier had to replace faulty weapons at his own expense. The weapons were checked on delivery, and if they failed to comply with the agreed specifications they were returned to the supplier. Arquebuses and muskets were supplied complete with all the accessories necessary to make their ammunition, since each soldier had to make his own. The whole process of placing and fulfilment of contracts was overseen by the *veedores*.

One important consideration was the transport of troops and supplies to the theatre of operations, which during this period was mainly the Low Countries. The difficulty of controlling the sea routes from the northern coasts of Spain to Flanders in time of war meant that it was necessary to maintain an overland corridor linking that territory with the Spanish possessions in Italy. This route, known as the 'Spanish Road', was inaugurated by the Duke of Alba in 1567. The exact itinerary varied – see map above – since intensive diplomatic efforts were required to guarantee that all stages of the route were kept open. This corridor was used until 1622, when French territorial gains interrupted it, isolating some Spanish territories from overland communications.

MORALE

Esprit de corps

By the latter part of the 16th century the Spanish army was recognized internationally as the dominant military force in Europe, and its infantry as the foundation of its effectiveness. Building upon the traditions of the long wars of reconquest against the Moors, the infantry had reinforced their self-esteem on the battlefields of the Italian wars, where they achieved supremacy over the heavy cavalry – essentially an aristocratic arm, who saw the decisive role in combat that they had previously enjoyed snatched from them by vulgar footsoldiers. Once the idea of the superiority of disciplined infantry over cavalry became generally accepted through a series of victories in Europe, coupled with the conquest of immense territories in the Americas, the Spanish soldier regarded himself as the equal of the archetype from whom Renaissance commentators sought their inspiration – the Roman soldier, ‘whose example must be followed in everything concerning good military discipline’ (Sancho de Londoño, *El discurso sobre la forma de reducir la disciplina militar...*, 1589).

This high opinion of themselves was continuously reinforced by their officers, and even by monarchs. The Emperor Charles V did not hesitate to exalt the Spaniards over the other nationalities in his armies: ‘...the [credit for the result] of their wars was placed in the lighted matches of his Spanish arquebusiers’ (Pierre de Bourdeille, *Gentilezas...*). It was also Charles V who, at a review he held to honour one of his most famous field marshals, Antonio de Leyva, appeared dressed as a humble pikeman. When asked how his name should be recorded on the rolls of the Tercio, the emperor replied: ‘Carlos de Gante, soldier of the gallant Tercio of Antonio de Leyva’ (*Inspección de Infantería, La infantería...*).

This self-esteem embodied strong beliefs concerning honour, loyalty and discipline – precepts that were continuously recalled and encouraged by Spanish leaders.

Honour and loyalty

The concept of personal and collective honour motivated soldiers to fulfil their duty, often to unexpected extremes. Nevertheless, sometimes it also led to quarrels that the officers had to learn how to handle, both among the Spaniards themselves and with soldiers of other nationalities. To the question ‘Sir, how many soldiers make up this army?’, a Spaniard might reply ‘6,000 soldiers’ – meaning Spaniards – then adding, ‘3,000 Italians, and 3,000 Germans’ (Pierre de Bourdeille, *Gentilezas...*).

Their superiors used appeals to honour to spur their men on when battle was in prospect, particularly if the situation was desperate. On the eve of Lepanto in 1571, Don John of Austria declaimed, ‘My sons, we have come here to die, or to conquer, if the heavens so provide’ (Cayetano Rosell, *Historial naval de Lepanto*). Honour was the

Don Fernando Álvarez de Toledo y Pimentel, Duke of Alba or Alva (1510–82) – as his victories attest, the outstanding military leader of his time. A ‘black legend’ arose around his command of the Tercios in Flanders; nevertheless, he only applied the laws that were in force during the period, and historians frequently overlook the fact that he tried to avoid excesses by imposing an iron discipline on his troops.
(Spanish Army Museum)





'The Victory of Fleurus', by Vicente Carducho; this battle was fought in 1622. It shows (low centre) arquebusiers firing at short range on musketeers heading an enemy formation, and beyond them a body of pikemen who are beginning to lower their weapons for an attack. In the left foreground, a wounded Spanish soldier fighting to the death with his long dagger still wears – intriguingly – an old-fashioned 'slashed' jacket. Mounted at the right is Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, a descendant of *El Gran Capitán*. His hat is adorned with plumes, and a lace collar is folded over his black half-armour, which is complete with articulated steel gauntlets. He has a broad red sash tied at his left hip, and carries a short baton of command. (Prado Museum)

concern of both officers and soldiers, and one soldier who took part in that battle would write: 'If my scars do not shine in others' eyes, at least they are respected by those who know their origin, since the soldier dead in battle appears preferable to the soldier alive in flight' (Miguel de Cervantes, *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, 2).

All these moral concepts were summed up by one of the greatest authors of the Spanish Golden Age, in a sonnet that is still learnt and sung by Spanish infantry units today. These lines extol obedience, courtesy, truthfulness, courage, constancy and honour, and conclude: 'The military is nothing other than a religion for honourable men' (Calderón de la Barca, *Para vencer a amor, querer vencerle*). The result of all this was a morale in battle and a sense of superiority that enabled the soldiers of the Tercios to undertake any task, since they considered themselves invincible. A famous example was one of the greatest feats of arms in military history, by 'the mutineers of Aalst'.

In 1576 some 1,500 unpaid Spanish soldiers stationed in the town of Aalst had mutinied, while in Antwerp, about 30 miles (50km) away, the Spanish garrison of the castle was under siege by large numbers of the rebel army. When they learned of this, the mutineers did not hesitate; setting out early in the morning, they arrived in Antwerp the following dawn. There they linked up with 600 other Spaniards and 800 German mercenaries, and the combined force of some 3,000 men managed to reach the besieged fortress. When asked to call a halt so that the men



could eat, the mutineers' elected spokesman replied that they had 'decided to eat in paradise, or to dine in the city of Antwerp' (Bernardino de Mendoza, *Comentario de la guerra de los Países Bajos*).

The enemy they faced were some six times their strength – 4,000 German and Walloon soldiers, and 14,000 Dutch militiamen – yet on hearing of the arrival of the Spaniards a Walloon captain judged the battle to be already lost: 'I knew all those people well, soldiers and generals, and I knew what they were capable of' (René Quatrefages, *Los Tercios*). Despite the disparity in numbers, the Spaniards invoked St James and hurled themselves against the entrenchments built around the fortress to the height of a pike (about 16ft/ 4–5m), overwhelming them and provoking disorder in the besiegers' ranks. The latter suffered more than 5,000 dead in the battle and subsequent flight, while only 14 dead were recorded among the Spaniards.

The Spanish soldier of the period owed his loyalty to God, the Spanish nation, the King of Spain, and his superiors. 'The captain will take care that the soldier learns and develops his memory ... that they keep and preserve the Christianity they inherited in Spain ... that they guard and preserve the Kingdoms and Provinces of their King' (Marcos de Isaba, *Cuerpo enfermo de la Milicia Española*). The presumption of his loyalty was such that the Spanish soldier was exempted from taking an oath of loyalty, as was required from all the other subjects of the Crown on their enlistment.

'The Surrender of Breda' by
Diego de Velázquez – a painting
also known as '*El cuadro de
las lanzas*'. It represents the
capitulation of this Dutch city
to Ambrosio de Spinola in 1625.
The Spanish general (centre
right) wears a long, broad red
sash, and carries the baton of
a captain-general in his left
hand. Note at left the heads
of halberds, and small-bladed
polearms with attached
pennants (corporals' partizans).
For the standard on the right,
see Plate H3. (Prado Museum)

Re-enactment of pikemen preparing to repel an attack by enemy cavalry; the foremost ranks are in the process of lowering their pikes to an angle of 45°, while the ranks behind are ready to fill the gaps. (Note that in reality the helmets and cuirasses would be spotlessly clean and polished; contemporaries emphasized that although the soldiers of the Tercios might be in rags, their arms and gear were always ready for action.)

The pike was manufactured from ash, walnut, or some other 'noble' wood. The lower one-third (from the butt-end of the shaft, or *cuento*) was thicker, to ensure that it would not warp or break over the course of time. The metal point ('moharra', from a verb meaning to dip something into sauce – 'dunking') came in several shapes, the most usual being a four-faced diamond section. Learning to march with a pike was not easy, since rhythmic vibration could make them 'bounce' on the shoulder. The weight and length of these weapons meant that soldiers were sometimes tempted to lighten them by shortening, and the officers had to be vigilant against this practice. (Luis Angel Cozar Collection)



Discipline

Loyalty to the king was unquestioned even during mutinies, since the monarch was not blamed for the causes that provoked them.

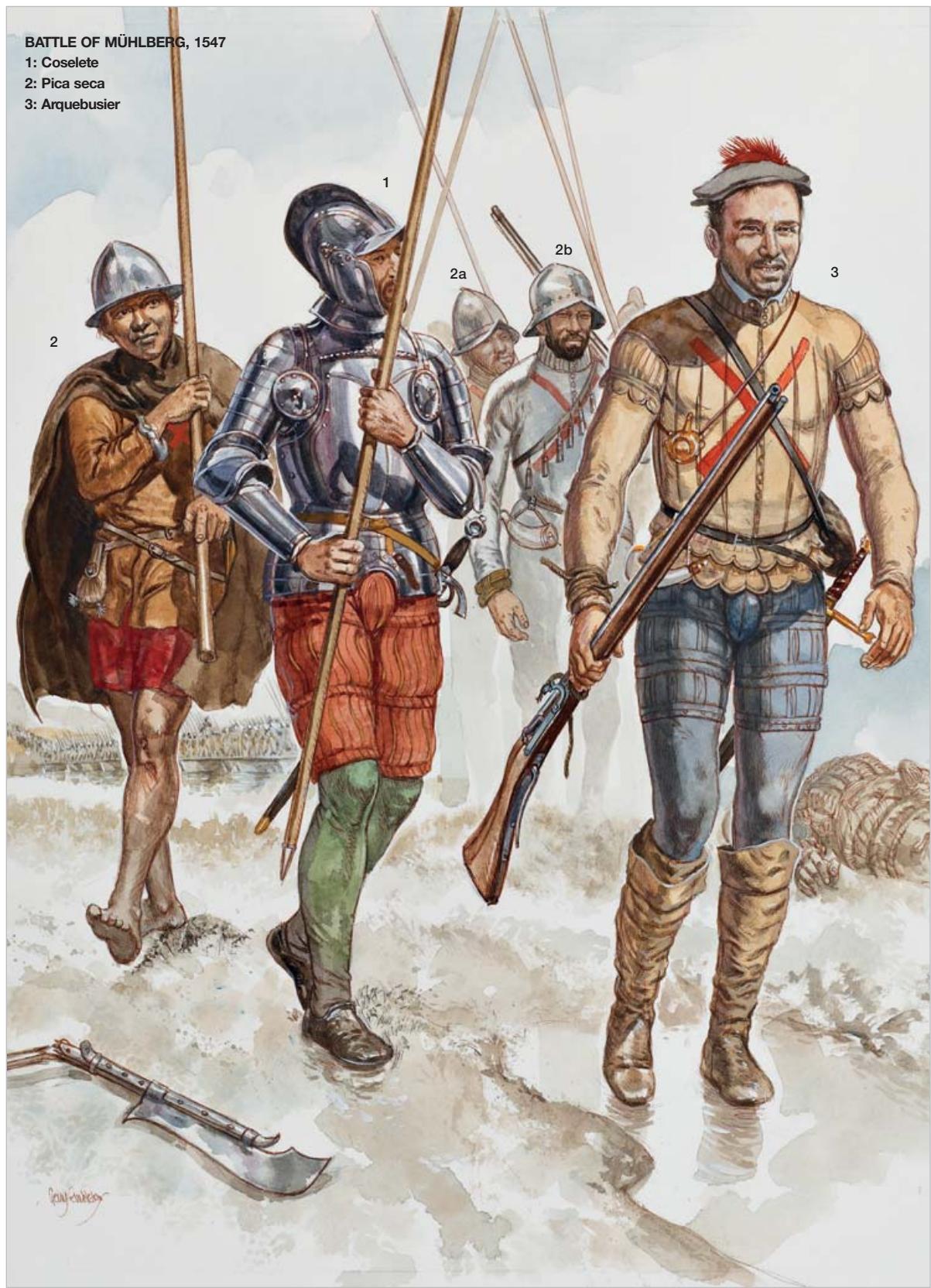
Mutinies were always due to arrears in the payment of wages (though unlike other nationalities in the army, the Spaniards never mutinied before a battle, so that they could never be accused of cowardice). The logistics system by which the soldiers were expected to pay for every necessity out of their wages inevitably collapsed when those wages failed to arrive for months or even years, which was often the case. When a mutiny occurred the soldiers refused to obey their officers, but followed a strict protocol. Officers and those not wishing to join the mutiny were expelled from the ranks, together with the standards – which, as a symbol of royal power, could not remain with the mutineers, or they would be dishonoured. Several representatives were then elected to form a council, given the mission of supervising the negotiations conducted between a soldier elected as spokesman – the '*electo*' – and the superior officers. These delegates were often replaced, and on occasion, if they failed to achieve their claims, they were put to death by their comrades.

To give their demands greater weight, the mutineers would settle in a town where they tried to gather up all the money, food and goods possible. Contrary to popular belief, this looting was not always a matter of uncontrolled pillage. The council issued guidelines on the matter, which had to be approved democratically by the mutineers; paradoxically, the discipline imposed was harsher than normal, with the death sentence for those who breached it, so as to avoid reprisals once the mutiny came to an end. It must be remembered that the soldier of that period had to pay not only for his own gear, his food and that of his servants, but even for members of his family who accompanied him, so that frequently he was motivated not by his own hunger but by that of those for whom he was responsible.

(continued on page 33)

BATTLE OF MÜHLBERG, 1547

1: Coselete
2: Pica seca
3: Arquebusier



SIEGE OF MALTA, 1565

1: Musketeer, Tercio Viejo de Sicilia
2: Officer
3: Maestre del campo



B

LATE 16th CENTURY

1: Pikeman, Tercio of Juan del Águila; Cornwall, 1595
2 & 3: Camp follower and boy porter, 'Spanish Road'



C

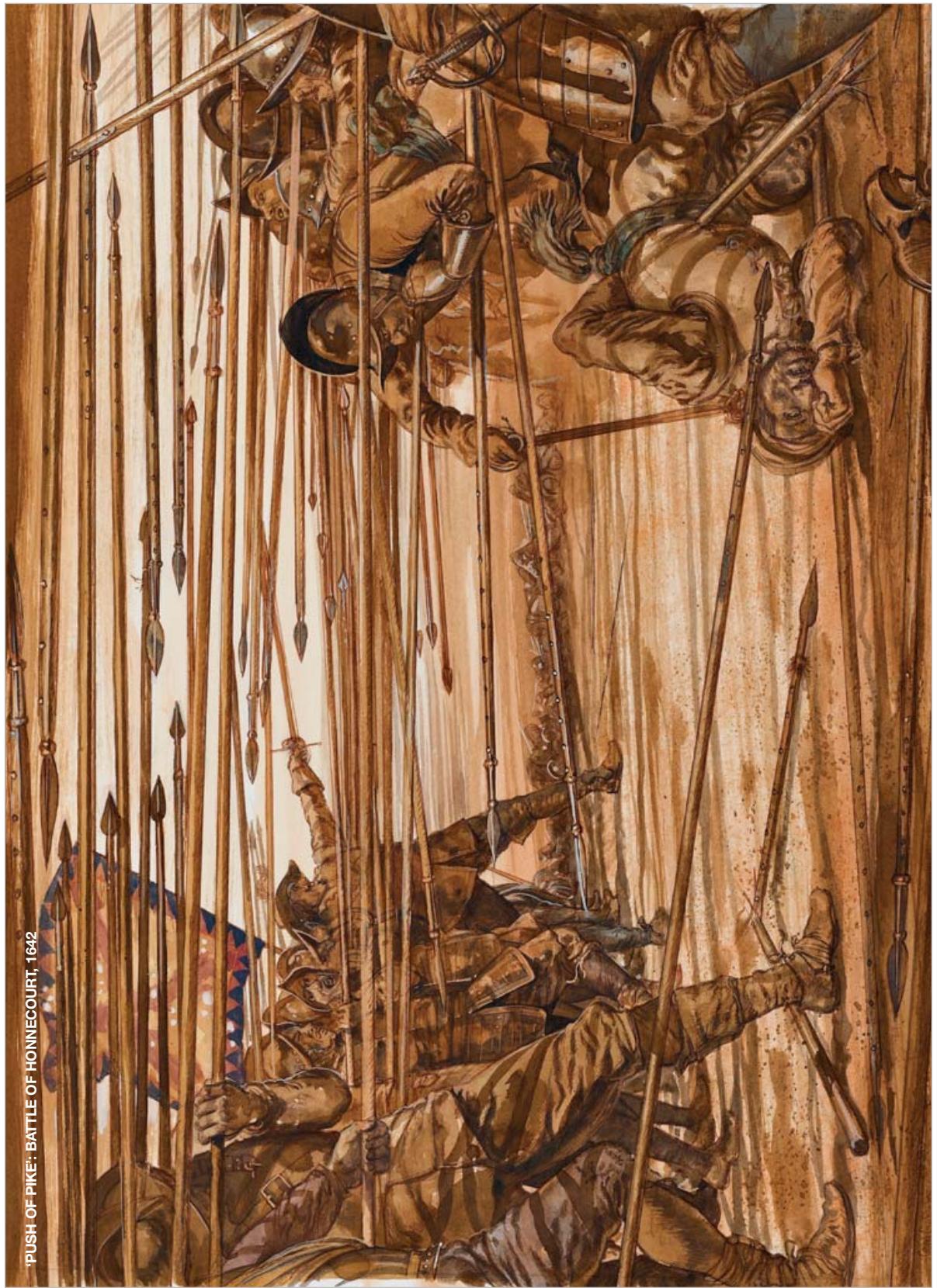


1630s–1650s
1: Cabo, Battle of Valenciennes, 1658
2: Musketeer, siege of Ayre, 1641
3: Arquebusier



FORMATIONS

- 1: Musketeers, Battle of Nordlingen, 1634
- 2: Partial section through tactical squadron, 17th C



F 'PUSH OF PIKE': BATTLE OF HONNECOURT, 1642

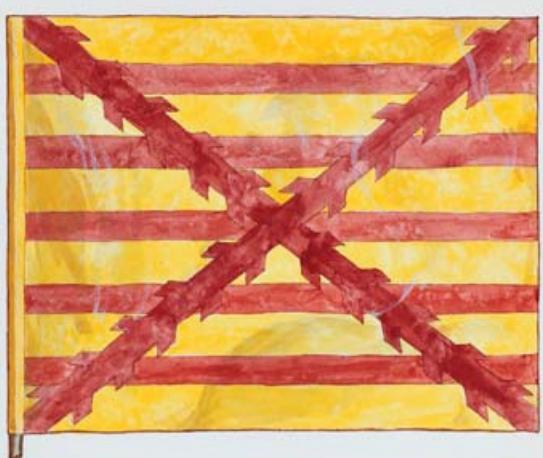


THE NINE YEARS' WAR, 1689-1701

- 1: Musketeer, Tercio Verdes Viejos'
- 2: Grenadier, Provincial Tercio of Seville
- 3: Pikeman, Tercio Colorados Viejos'

FLAGS

See commentary text for details



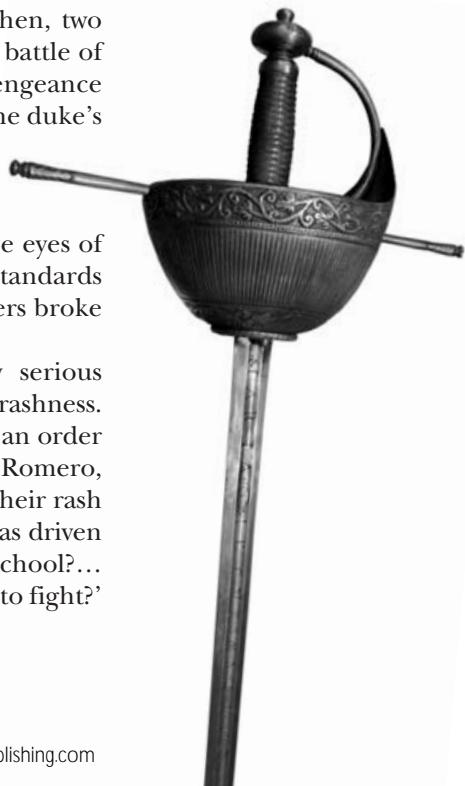
Undeniably, the consequent mutinies were an evil that greatly eroded the effectiveness of the Tercios, sometimes bringing to a halt operations and annual campaigns that would otherwise have ended victoriously. Soldiers who were hungry and reduced to rags were unable to march and fight effectively, and in such hardships they had no option but to ignore orders and disperse to pillage the countryside. This both weakened the authority of their officers, and aggravated the fear and hatred with which they were regarded by the civil population. This was particularly so when their behaviour degenerated into mass atrocities such as the infamous ‘sack of Antwerp’ in 1576 (in which, it must be remembered, German and Walloon soldiers also took part alongside the Spanish).

Such incidents should not be interpreted as meaning that the Tercios generally lacked internal discipline, which was undoubtedly a basic factor in their victories. An outward sign of this was that the soldiers typically fought in silence, broken only by their officers’ orders and the traditional warcry of the Spanish infantry, which rose up just before they went into combat: ‘*Santiago y Cierra, España!*’ (‘St James and Close Up, Spain!’). The soldier was forbidden to absent himself from his unit. Normally – and despite intermittent episodes of disobedience – military orders also prohibited pillaging and protected civilians, giving particular emphasis to showing respect for women. To reduce the temptation to rape, ‘public women’ (prostitutes) were allowed to follow the military train, in numbers that were officially regulated at about 5 per cent of the number of men in the ranks.

While condemned individuals were hanged, the ultimate collective punishment for indiscipline was the disbandment of an entire Tercio, of which one of the most striking cases was that of the Tercio of Sardinia in 1568, early in the Dutch wars. The impulsive conduct of soldiers who disobeyed their officers led to a defeat at the hands of the rebels; some of the soldiers trying to hide from the enemy pursuit were betrayed, and others were killed by local country people. When, two months later, the Duke of Alba crushed the rebel army at the battle of Jemmingen, men of the Tercio of Sardinia decided to take vengeance into their own hands and burned houses in the area, despite the duke’s strict orders to the contrary. This, together with the lack of discipline that had led to the first defeat, provoked Alba to order not only the death penalty for the guilty but also the dissolution of this, one of the oldest of the Tercios. Before the eyes of the weeping soldiers, the ensigns ceremonially burned the standards and the troops their distinguishing field signs, while the officers broke the flagstaffs.

Collective indiscipline could obviously have potentially serious consequences even when it involved not flight but foolish rashness. During the siege of Haarlem in 1572 veteran troops disobeyed an order to withdraw, thus causing unnecessary losses. This led Julián Romero, Field Marshal of the *Tercio Viejo de Sicilia*, to chide his men for their rash conduct: ‘What is this recklessness, or rather this frenzy, that has driven you? Did you learn this disorder in the Duke of Alba’s military school?... Do you want to get yourselves killed without having the chance to fight?’ (Guido Bentivoglio, *Guerra de Flandes*).

Mid-17th century sword with bowl-shaped guard. While the price naturally varied with the degree of decoration, the basic model was quicker and cheaper to produce than swords with complex hand-protection of separate bows and rings. (Spanish Army Museum)





A 16th-century arquebus; superfluous items have been removed, making it is possible to see the serpentine holding the match.

Despite modern trials with both original and accurately reproduced 16th and 17th-century weapons, the variables are such that it is difficult to calculate their effective range precisely, and even more so to differentiate between theoretical ranges and those actually achieved in battle. In the early 17th century the effective range might be estimated at around 100 yards/ metres for arquebuses and up to twice that for muskets, and a further 50–70 yards may have been gained by the end of the century. However, note that 'effective' range always means when practised men were firing at a formed mass of the enemy, and allowing for the rapid drop of the ball over any distance; firing at an individual soldier at more than about 100 yards was usually a waste of ammunition. (Spanish Army Museum)

EQUIPMENT

Weapons

The predominant weapon in this period was the **pike**, described at the end of the 16th century as the 'queen of battles'. The pikes used in the first Italian campaigns were shorter than those of the Landsknechts and Swiss mercenaries serving the French, but by the mid-16th century the Spanish 'full' pike had to be around 27 Castilian 'palms' long (about 18ft/ 5.5m), and never less than 25 palms (16.4ft/ 5 metres). This gave the full pike a weight of nearly 8lb (3.5kg). In battle, pikes were usually carried vertically at the right shoulder until the time came to charge the enemy, when they were lowered. During marches they were carried almost horizontally, and period documents even describe them being supported on the shoulders of the ranks to the rear. The short or half-pike, up to 9.8ft (3m) long, was used aboard ships for naval combat, where they were much appreciated for their relative ease of manoeuvre.

The company officers carried different **polearms**. The halberd was the weapon of the sergeants; it was also used by 25 armoured *coseletes* in each company of arquebusiers, to defend them during hand-to-hand fighting. Captains (and sometimes sergeant-majors) carried a *gineta*, with a teardrop-shaped blade above a fringed collar, and the *partesana* was the weapon of corporals. However, these arms were carried as distinctions of status rather than for fighting, and captains fought with the weapons of their companies.

Since sword-and-buckler men were no longer present in the Tercios after the time of their official recognition, the **sword** remained as a secondary weapon for hand-to-hand fighting and – when the need arose – to deal a death-blow to the defeated. The most typical sword, and the cheapest and simplest to make, was the model with a bowl-shaped guard that gave some protection to the hand. More elaborate barred and ringed hilts were seen, although their higher price limited their use mainly to officers. Each fighter was expected to carry a dagger, both as weapon of last resort and an everyday tool.

In the case of **firearms**, some care must be taken over the terms used. It is conventional to use 'handguns' for the primitive 15th-century weapons that were fired by applying a smouldering matchcord to the priming powder by hand, or by manually moving an S-shaped match-holder or 'serpentine'. At some date between 1450 and 1470 the first 'matchlocks' appeared, on which the serpentine was brought against the priming by manipulating a basic trigger mechanism ('lock', from a rudimentary resemblance to the mechanism of a door lock). By the start of the 16th century the matchlock firearm, now heavier and with an

improved mechanism, was generally called an 'arquebus' or harquebus. Its use had outstripped other missile weapons by a ratio of 3:2 by the battle of Pavia in 1525, and by the 1530s it was the usual weapon of the shot element of the Tercios.

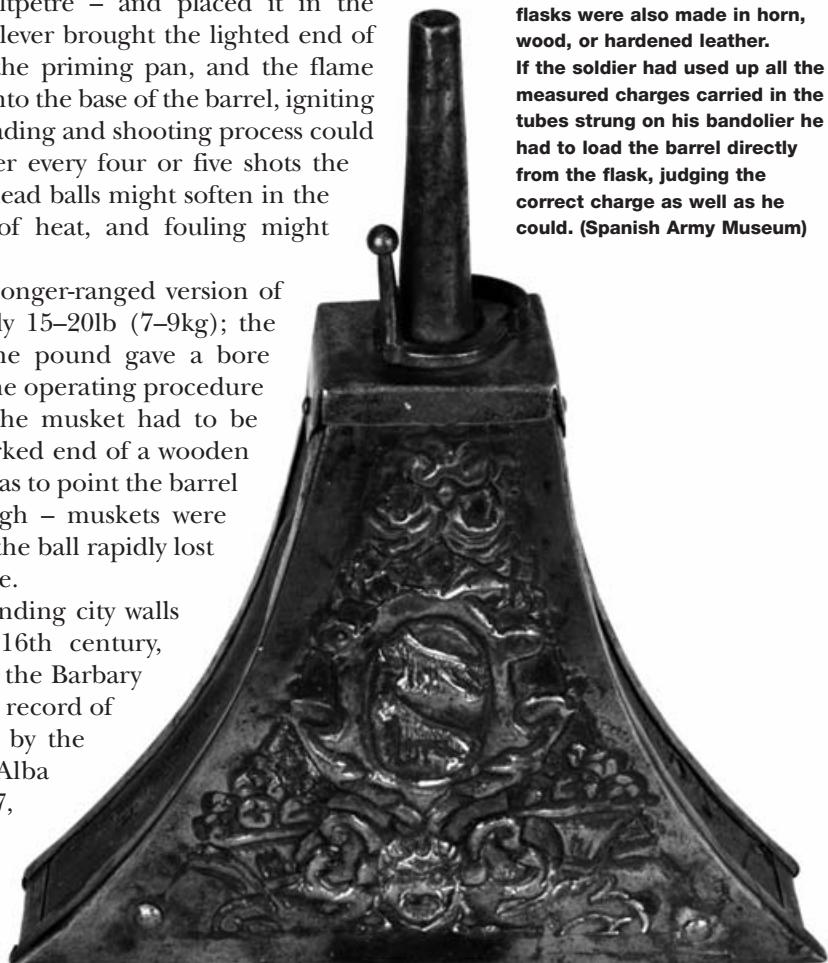
The arquebus weighed about 11lb (5kg), with a barrel roughly 3ft (1m) long. The calibre was measured by the weight of the ball it took, varying between 0.75oz and 1.5oz (21–42g). The artisan basis of manufacture produced weapons in many different calibres, though often about 12mm–14mm (0.50–0.55 inches). Each arquebusier was provided with a pincers-mold ('turquesa') with which he cast his balls from molten lead; they had to be of a size to run down the barrel freely, allowing for the fouling of the bore by burnt powder during repeated firing. He carried a supply of around 50 balls into battle (about twice the number of the heavier balls later carried by musketeers).

In advance, the arquebusier measured out gunpowder into small, capped, wooden or leather tubes which he carried strung from a 'bandolier of charges'. After pouring a powder charge into the muzzle, he loaded the ball, pushing it firmly into place with a 'scouring stick' (ramrod). The flash pan on the outside of the lock was then primed with finer-ground, more immediately combustible powder, which was carried in a separate flask. The arquebusier then lit the matchcord – made from linen or hemp, soaked in saltpetre – and placed it in the serpentine. Moving the trigger-lever brought the lighted end of the cord into the powder in the priming pan, and the flame passed through a 'touch-hole' into the base of the barrel, igniting the main charge. The entire loading and shooting process could take up to 2 minutes, and after every four or five shots the arquebusier had to pause; the lead balls might soften in the barrel through the build-up of heat, and fouling might require scouring out.

The musket was a heavier, longer-ranged version of the arquebus weighing roughly 15–20lb (7–9kg); the ball weight of about 12 to the pound gave a bore diameter of 20mm or more. The operating procedure was unchanged, except that the musket had to be supported for firing on the forked end of a wooden pole rest. The only aim taken was to point the barrel at the target and to shoot high – muskets were notoriously muzzle-heavy, and the ball rapidly lost velocity after leaving the muzzle.

Muskets were used for defending city walls from the beginning of the 16th century, principally in the garrisons on the Barbary Coast of North Africa. The first record of their use on the battlefield is by the army that the Duke of Alba marched up to Flanders in 1567, when he ordered that each arquebus company should have 15 musketeers. The musket never fully replaced the arquebus, although the

Iron gunpowder flask, as carried by arquebusiers and musketeers; flasks were also made in horn, wood, or hardened leather. If the soldier had used up all the measured charges carried in the tubes strung on his bandolier he had to load the barrel directly from the flask, judging the correct charge as well as he could. (Spanish Army Museum)



A handsome example of a breastplate, such as might have been worn by an officer of pikemen. The belly is drawn down into the 'peascod' shape; this was fashionable in the late 16th century, in imitation of clothing fashions of the day, but gave no better protection than a conventional profile. Breastplates were usually combined with backplates into a full cuirass – though the backplates were thinner – and sometimes with escarcelas (tassets). Weighing between 6lb and 11lb (3–5kg), breastplates provided good protection against bladed weapons, and might be proof against firearms at medium ranges, since few fired balls that could penetrate more than 2mm of steel at 100 yards.

(Spanish Army Museum)

proportion of muskets gradually increased; for example, in 1601 a muster report in the Army of Flanders listed 1,237 musketeers to 2,117 arquebusiers, with 1,047 armoured pikemen and 954 unarmoured.

By the late 17th century the continuing evolution of firearms brought the extended use of the flintlock or 'firelock', which produced a spark by striking a flint wedge against a spring-loaded steel pan cover; this was termed the 'arquebus with stone' in the Second Ordinance of Flanders (1701). The calibre was similar to that of the matchlock musket. Although they were in use by the beginning of the 18th century they did not completely replace matchlocks in the Tercios.

Most Spanish firearms were manufactured at the Royal Factories and Royal Armouries, located in towns such as Mondragón, Éibar, Ermua, Vergara, Elgóibar and Placencia, in what are today the provinces of Biscaya and Guipuzcoa. Working from foreign models, the Royal Arms Factory in Placencia de las Armas became one of the largest arms centres in Europe, producing around 12,000 arquebuses and 3,000 muskets per year. At the end of the 17th century it was still customary to call the heavy matchlock muskets 'Biscayan muskets', to differentiate them from flintlock weapons.

Armour

The armour used by soldiers of the Tercio diminished over the years. The 16th-century heavy *coselete* who fought exposed in the front several ranks of

the squadron wore a full cuirass, a gorget, tassets hanging down the thighs, armour covering the upper and lower arms, and metal-plated gauntlets. Even without a helmet all this could weigh up to 40lb (18kg); officers might provide themselves with more complete suits of fine quality armour, which, if more protective, were also heavier.

The *picas secas* fighting in the rear ranks of the Tercio did not wear body armour, but both classes of pikemen and 16th-century arquebusiers usually wore a metal helmet, a *morion* or *cabaceta* of Spanish or Italian origin – Italy was the home base of many Tercios. Campaign service with other 16th-century Imperial troops, and during the Thirty Years' War, certainly led to some use of helmets of other styles. Those seen in period pictures include the cavalry-style open-faced burgonet, and the *birnhelm* resembling a morion with a low comb, both of which had additional plate or lamellar neck and cheek protection.

As firearms gradually proliferated and improved, the use of plate armour became increasingly pointless. By the



mid-17th century the *coseletes* retained only the breastplate and helmet, both of which had fallen into almost total disuse by the end of the century. The ubiquitous broad-brimmed 'slouch' hat had already been in use, in various forms, since the later 16th century, and by the mid-17th it had become standard throughout the Tercio. Of the employment of musketeers in siege work, it was said that 'They cannot wear helmets, but rather smart plumed hats which decorate but do not defend. Not too tall, so they are not spotted in the trenches' (Martín de Eguiluz, *Milicia, discurso y regla militar*).

TACTICS

Formations

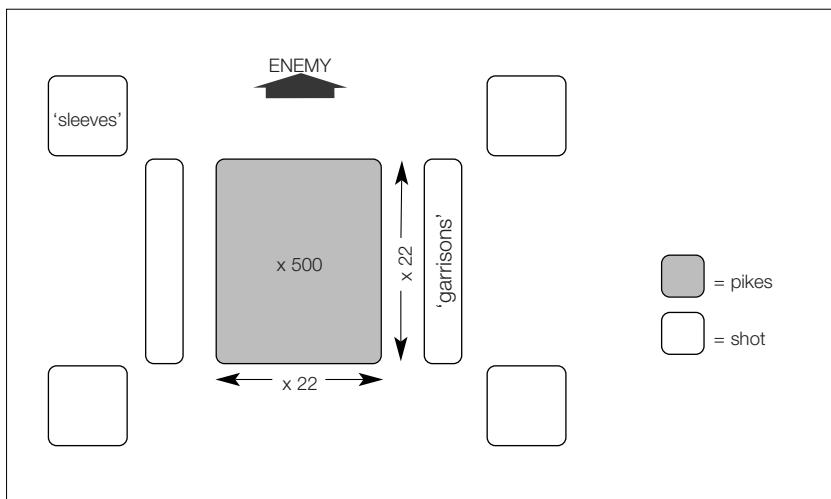
The Tercio formed up as a tactical 'squadron', which could adopt different forms according to the terrain, the mission or the enemy. The most widely used were the *cuadro de terreno* ('field square'), *cuadro de gente* ('square of men'), *cuadro prolongado* ('extended square') and *cuadro de gran frente* ('wide-fronted square'), although there were several others. Each soldier in the pike formation was assumed to physically occupy a 1ft width (0.32m) with a space of 1ft to each side, 3ft in front and 3ft behind him. The arquebusiers and musketeers allowed twice that sideways gap, in order to avoid accidents when handling powder and burning match during movements.

From these data and the numbers of men available, the sergeant-major of the Tercio and the company sergeants used square-root calculations to arrive at the number of ranks and files to be drawn up in the formation ordered. For example, the *cuadro de gente* had an (approximately) equal number of ranks and files, but was a deep rectangular formation, because of the greater intervals between the ranks than the files, and also the space in the centre of the squadron for the rank of company flags, with a rather larger interval in front and behind. This formation was usually adopted in open country if the enemy had superiority of cavalry, as it secured the defence in all directions. The *cuadro de terreno*, with roughly twice as many files as ranks, was a more or less square formation. If greater

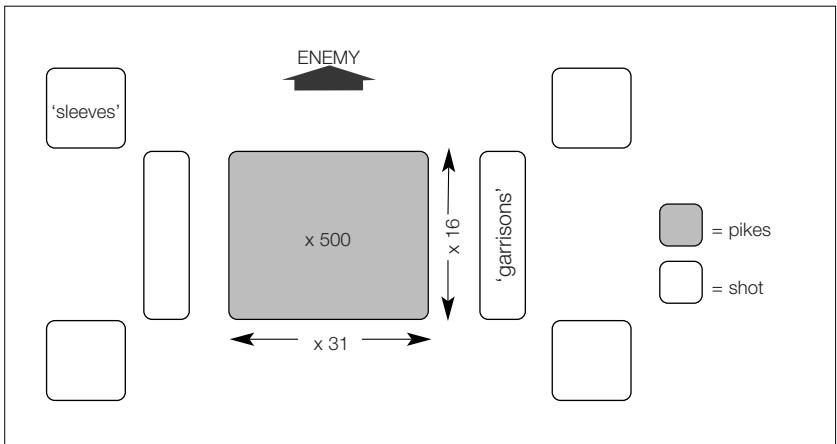
The *cuadro de gente* formation for a tactical squadron. Its composition was calculated from the square root of the pikemen available, in this example 500.

500 = c.22, so we have 22 ranks and 22 files (if 'rounding off' left any surplus men they were placed wherever the officer thought most useful). This gave a frontage of c.20.5m, and a depth of c.45.5m for the pike ranks, plus c.4.5m for the rank of standards in the centre – so a total depth of c.50 metres. The rectangle thus measured approximately 22 yards wide by 55 yards deep.

The 'sleeves' of arquebusiers – numbering anything from about 100 to 400 men each – acted flexibly, depending on the situation. They might go on ahead to weaken advancing enemy units with their fire, or spread out laterally to skirmish, and if seriously threatened by enemy cavalry they could contract into a few ranks around all four sides of the pike block, 'girdling' it under cover of the foremost ranks of pikes. The linear 'garrisons' of shot – numbering about 30 to 60 men – always stuck close to the pike formation.



The composition of the *cuadro de terreno* was much more complicated for the sergeant-major to calculate than the *cuadro de gente*. The number of pikemen available was multiplied by 2,041; the result was divided by 1,000, and the square root of this figure was calculated (or probably, looked up in a book of tables) to give the number of files. For the number of ranks, the number of pikemen was divided by the number of files. So, with 500 pikemen: $500 \times 2,041 = 1,020,500$; divided by 1,000 = 1,020.5; $1,020.5 = 31.9$ files; so divide 500 by 31 = 16 full ranks, with a few men over. This gave a frontage of c.29m, and a depth of 32m for the pikemen plus c.4.5m for the standards – so a total depth of c.36.5 metres. The square thus measured approximately 32 yards wide by 40 yards deep.



fighting power was required at the front, the *cuadro prolongado* was used – the same as the *cuadro de gente*, but with the long axis of the rectangle facing the enemy.

The squadron usually consisted of a central core of pikemen, of which at least half should be *coseletes* placed in the foremost ranks. They were always accompanied on each flank by two linear detachments of arquebusiers to provide fire support. These ‘garrisons’ varied in strength between 30 and 60, with a maximum frontage of five men.

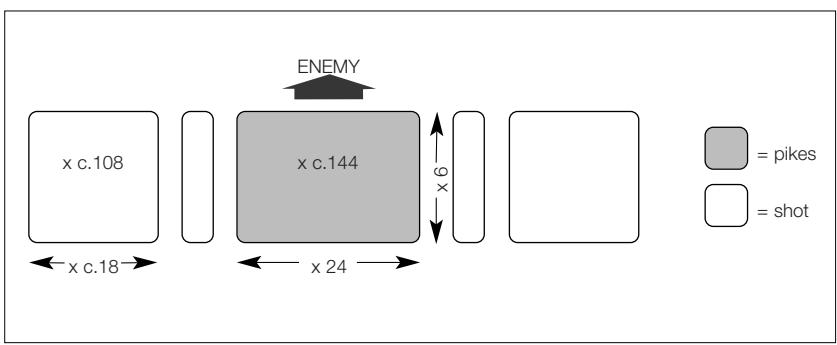
The deployment was completed by several other detachments of shot, known as *mangas* (‘sleeves’); positioned at the outside corners of the squadron, they were able to act freely according to the orders received. A ‘sleeve’ might comprise anything from 100 to 400 men, and might be accompanied by a detachment of pikemen or, more usually, halberdiers, to provide the shot with an improvised defence if they were surprised by the sudden appearance of cavalry before they could fall back on the pike block.

As the efficiency of firearms increased during the 17th century, so their numbers increased relative to the numbers of pikemen in the Tercios, and consequently the front of the tactical formations became longer and their depth diminished.

The Tercio in battle

The Spanish arquebusiers and musketeers usually fired in successive volleys to achieve almost continuous firing. This was described in a book signed by King Philip II in 1591 – several years, be it noted, before the

By the late 17th century the frontage had been extended at the cost of the depth, since firearms were more numerous than pikes. The small pike square here is drawn up in only 6 ranks and 24 files, so measures roughly 25 yards wide by 14 yards deep. The greater intervals between the files of shot account for the smaller number of men in a formation of roughly similar size.



alleged first creation of this tactic by Maurice of Nassau. (In fact, the basic method had been employed throughout the 16th century, at Bicocca and perhaps even at Cerignola.) The author describes it as follows: ‘The first volley by three ranks each of five soldiers, separated from each other by 15 steps, and not with fury but calmly and skilfully; and when the first rank has finished firing, without turning, they cede their place to the next rank, passing it on the left and presenting their sides to the enemy, as the narrowest part of the body ... to fire again, with order and in the same place’ (Martín de Eguiluz, *Discurso...*).

At the approach of the enemy, the detachments of shot fell back and sought refuge within the squadron, and this was the moment for the pikemen to go into action. The posture they adopted depended upon whether they were facing cavalry or other pikemen. Against horsemen, they placed the pike at an angle of 45° supported by the left hand, with its butt on the ground and held steady by the right foot, while drawing the sword with the right hand in case it was needed. Period commentators describe two postures for pikemen fighting against infantry: with the pike at thigh height, which was more comfortable but which lacked great impact, or with the pike held at shoulder level, which was more fatiguing but which lent greater weight to a thrust. When pike squadrons confronted one another, the pikes in the first three ranks were lowered from the vertical to the fighting position, and casualties were replaced by men from the ranks behind them. If necessary, the sword was used as the last resort. Meanwhile, the ‘garrisons’ and ‘sleeves’ of arquebusiers continued to fire on the enemy formation, preferably from a flank.

When one of the two formations retreated, the unarmoured *picas secas* – who, if everything had gone according to plan, would not have seen much fighting – were responsible for relieving their more heavily equipped comrades in the front half of the block, in case of any unexpected reaction from the enemy. Meanwhile, the lines of shot continued to fire to hasten their foes’ retreat.

On more than one occasion the recklessness of the Spaniards led them to break the formation to pursue retreating enemies. This occurred at the battle of Nordlingen (1634), when, after repelling an attack by regiments of the Swedish army, a number of soldiers, acting on their own account, chased after the retreating Swedes and thus placed the squadron in jeopardy, although the situation was saved by orders from the officers.

The Tercios have often been described as if they were monolithic blocks, but the facts show otherwise. The tactical squadrons were formed with the men available, frequently from different Tercios; for instance, at Nordlingen successive detachments of arquebusiers were sent to reinforce the Tercio of Idiaquez fighting in the front line.

At Fleurus (1622), one squadron was formed partly by the Old Tercio of Naples and completed not even with other Spaniards, but with Walloons and Burgundians. This demonstrates a high flexibility.

So too does the fact that during this period the Spaniards were also particularly renowned for the type of actions known as ‘*encamisadas*’ ('shirted'). These were surprise attacks and ambushes, frequently carried out by night. They gained their nickname from the fact that soldiers would put their white shirts on over the top of their outer clothing and gear, so as to be able to recognize friend from foe quickly.

CLOTHING

The infantry soldiers' clothing did not usually differ from that worn by civilians, although in the course of time their garments became more specialized. In the mid-17th century local authorities began to legislate against the use by civilians of garments and colours reserved for the military.

The 16th-century soldier usually wore over his loose-fitting shirt a doublet or short, close-fitting jacket; early in the century this was still attached by laces or 'points' (*agujetas*) to tight-fitting hose. The *coleto* was a leather jacket worn over the doublet; if it had sleeves it was called a *ropilla*. The sleeves of the *ropilla* could often be unfastened to hang back over the shoulders ('lost sleeves') – a feature appreciated by arquebusiers and musketeers, as it eased their movements when reloading their weapons.

Spanish armies operating abroad copied foreign fashions, and during the reign of Charles I & V German styles became widespread. Although never as extreme as the Landsknecht garments from which they were copied, jerkins and '*gregüescos*' – a type of decorative shorts, worn at first in one piece with the hose, and later separately over knee-

length breeches and stockings – were 'slashed' or 'pinked' to show contrasting colours beneath.

These German-inspired fashions lasted well into the reign of Philip II, but alongside garments of more conventional cut. Doublets, sometimes with rolls or 'wings' at the shoulders, were worn with generously cut kneebreeches, both garments often with many small buttons. The *casaca* was a long over-jacket with split sleeves, and thigh-length cloaks were widely worn by men of all classes. So were various types of caps and hats; during the mid to late 16th century hats evolved, tall crowns with narrow brims giving way to lower crowns and broad brims. There are references to particular affectations in the clothing of different Tercios (e.g. a beribboned 'Tercio of Dandies', or a sober 'Tercio of Sextons'). However, at all times soldiers tried to show off their status with the best clothing they could afford: 'And it is plain to see that ten thousand armed soldiers in coloured dress have more bulk and arouse more fear than twenty thousand or more dressed in black' (Martín de Eguiluz, *Milicia...*).

Engraving of a swaggering Spanish infantry captain of the later 16th century, wearing a braided and buttoned jerkin of fashionable 'peascod' shape over a doublet with slashed and braided sleeves. Note the starched ruffs at his neck and wrists; the long sash tied high behind his right shoulder; and the *gineta*, with two collars of fringes and a carved staff.





From the last third of the 17th century, when Louis XIV's France became dominant throughout Europe, French fashions began to be adopted. The short jacket was replaced with a long frock coat of French origin (properly the *justaucorps*, in Spain this too may have been termed a *casaca*), and the felt slouch hat became not merely practical but fashionable. These items were popularly called the *chamberga* and *chambergo*, after the mercenary general Frederick, Duke of Schomberg, who commanded Portuguese troops in the Spanish-Portuguese war (1657–68) and later served as a French marshal.

At all periods, soldiers on campaign were often unable to replace worn-out clothing, and due to chronic delays in payment of their wages they were incapable of supplying themselves even with real necessities. On these occasions the Tercios might be reduced to bare feet and rags: 'No-one in the same poverty is poorer, because he is limited to the pittance of his wages which arrive either late or never ... and sometimes his nudity is such that a slashed jerkin serves him as his formal dress and his shirt' (Miguel de Cervantes, *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote...*). Field Marshal Juan del Águila described the situation of the men in his Tercio, who fought for years in Brittany without a line of communication with Spain: '...all of them naked, armed with swords lacking sheaths, owed six payments in arrears, broken, lean and haggard...' (Cesareo Fernández Duro, *La Armada Española desde la Unión de los Reinos de Castilla y León*).

Field signs

Troops wearing motley clothing needed distinctive insignia to differentiate them from their enemies at a glance. From the early 16th

Engraving showing Spanish musketeers (centre, carrying rests) and arquebusiers leaving Paris in March 1594. Costume details are depicted with some care, including starched neck ruffs (centre). Note a jerkin (far left) and breeches (second right) cut with patterns of small slashes – 'pinking'. Two men (first & second left) wear what seem to be 'Montero' caps, and others archaic-looking iron kettle-hats (centre, far right). Baggy, side-buttoned kneebreeches are worn either loose or tied to the leg, in both cases with large knots of ribbon visible below the knees; and note braid decoration (far left, far right). Most of these soldiers carry daggers with S-shaped quillons. Spanish fighting men were famous for a style of face-to-face combat with sword and dagger in the right and left hand respectively.

Engraving of a Catalan militia musketeer, 1641. He wears a lavishly plumed hat, and a wide shirt collar folded outside his jerkin – both indications of relative wealth. Note the ‘wings’ at the shoulders and hanging ‘lost sleeves’ of the *ropilla* jerkin; the sword slung from a shoulder belt; the gauntlets; and the overstockings in folds below the knees. Spare match, a single flask and a bullet bag can be seen at his waist belt. He has no ‘bandolier of charges’, but what seem to be powder tubes are shown on the waist belt at his right hip.



century the red saltire was adopted, and crimson was the distinguishing colour of the Spanish soldiers of the Tercios. As a symbol of their rank, officers wore red sashes across the chest or around the waist. In the case of generals and field marshals these could be long, broad, made of silk, and fastened with extravagant bows. Officers' helmets often bore plumes, dyed red or white, and attached to the helmet (or even to the slouch hat) by means of a socket at the back. The troops used lengths of red cloth tied or sewn around their arms, or a stylized red St Andrew's Cross sewn to the jacket or jerkin; these crosses varied in size, from a few inches to extending over the whole width of the chest.

The first uniforms

Until the last quarter of the 17th century each soldier bought whatever clothes were within his means. However, through contracts called ‘*asientos*’, the military authorities purchased clothing from civilian suppliers, generally in the area where the Tercio or company was stationed. These contracts specified the garments to be supplied, and

sometimes the colour of the woollen or linen cloth. (This applied only to clothing for the use of the troops; officers naturally acquired theirs privately, so usually these were of costlier materials, superior cut and more lavish decoration.) A receipt dated 25 May 1643 for clothing delivered by a contractor to the Royal Arsenal of Castel Nuovo lists ‘5,720 complete suits of clothing for soldiers, each suit consisting of a cassock, a pair of breeches, a doublet, a leather jacket, two shirts with their collars, a pair of hose, a pair of shoes, a hat and a sword’.

As the 17th century progressed, such bulk purchases by royal officials increasingly ensured that soldiers wore mass-produced garments that were at least very similar in materials and colours. This gradual standardization was confirmed through various royal edicts during the last quarter of the century that specified distinctive unit colours. For example, from 1683 the colours in which the frock coats of the Spanish Tercios in the Naples garrison should be made were stipulated in clothing contracts. These coat colours, then known as ‘*divisas*’ (a term later reserved for the coat facings) were to give rise to the unofficial names of the Tercios: thus the Provincial Tercio of Seville would be known as ‘the Purples’, and that of Valladolid ‘the Greens’.

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PLATE COMMENTARIES

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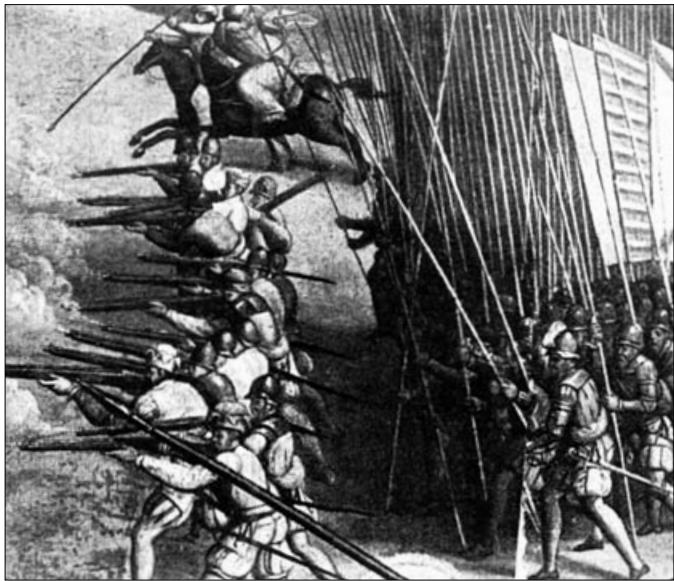
A: BATTLE OF MÜHLBERG, 1547

A1: Coselete

This veteran pikeman of the Duke of Alba’s army, which has just crossed the Elbe river, wears an open-faced burgonet helmet and half-armour – a Nuremberg cuirass, without tassets (though these may be carried with the baggage train). The Spanish monarchy purchased armour from many sources, and most of the pieces in the Royal Collection in Madrid were made by German craftsmen. The short breeches (in the English term, ‘upper stocks’) show the influence of the Landsknecht troops alongside whom the Spaniards fought in Charles V’s Imperial army; made in one piece with, or laced to, the hose (‘nether stocks’), these are taken from a painting of 1536–44 now in Avila Cathedral. The sword is a typical 16th-century model, with protective ‘gavilanes’ at the hilt.

A2: Pica seca

This young man is on his first campaign, and has only the minimum essentials: his pike, a narrow-brimmed pot helmet, and (hidden here) a sword, which may be an old-fashioned family heirloom. This helmet shape is the true ‘Spanish morion’. His simple homespun clothes are based on contemporary paintings showing poor men and servants; the



In this detail from a painting of the 1530s, a line of arquebusiers are shown skirmishing ahead of a pike formation; they wear a mixture of pot helmets, and 'pork pie'-shaped caps with turn-ups, some of the latter cut in lappets. Two stages of the German style of legwear that became popular in the reign of Charles I & V can be seen in the foreground: (left) one-piece hose slashed and stuffed at the thigh, and (right) 'upper stocks'.

The question of exactly how far, and how quickly, foreign fashions influenced costume styles is problematic. Period art shows that in broad terms it certainly happened, and the court and nobility, and soldiers who campaigned abroad, would be exposed to new styles. However, there were no mass media to disseminate images; most people of the class who enlisted in armies were poor, and were limited to local materials and garments of traditional cut.

short cloak was sometimes hooded. **A2a, 2b:** Two more examples of contemporary helmets, as widely worn throughout European armies – transitional forms that might equally be termed 'cabasset' or 'morion'.

A3: Arquebusier

The quality of his clothing shows him to be a man of some substance. He wears one of the styles of bonnet seen in art of the period. His expensive leather jacket, slashed and scalloped, bears a large red Burgundy Cross sewn to the breast as a sign of his nationality. He too wears German-inspired hose, made in one piece but appearing as 'upper' and 'nether stocks'. The powder, priming powder and bullets for his arquebus are carried in a horn, a small flask and a bag. Matchcord might be carried ready for use wrapped around the arm or waist, but since it was hygroscopic it was important to keep spare lengths dry inside the clothes or under the hat. Period illustrations of 'snapsacks' or haversacks are very rare, but the soldiers must have had somewhere to carry food and small effects – particularly the arquebusiers' bullet-moulds, flint-and-steel and tinder boxes. The artist Vermeyen, who accompanied the 1535 Tunis expedition, shows nearly every pikeman carrying what seems to be a snapsack, but one soldier is clearly drinking from his, so perhaps they are waterskins?

(Weapons and armour: Spanish Army Museum; Wallace Collection; Imperial Arsenal, Vienna. Clothing: *La infantería en torno al siglo del oro*, 1993; Conde de Clonard, *Album de la infantería española*, 1861; Jan Cornelis Vermeyen, 'The Landing at La Goulette'; Cornelis de Holanda, 'Pilate Washing his Hands', Avila Cathedral)

B: SIEGE OF MALTA, 1565

B1: Musketeer, Tercio Viejo de Sicilia

On the night of 5 July, four companies of this veteran unit sent by the Spanish Viceroy of Sicily slipped past the Turks to reach the harbour forts, in the defence of which these 600 men would play an essential part. While the first recorded order for adding specific numbers of heavy musketeers to the Tercios dates from 1567, in practice the proportion of

firearms always outstripped the regulations, and Spain was in the forefront of infantry firearms development. This man is ramming down the ball, but not so hard as to hamper easy ignition of the powder. Veteran arquebusiers used to put up to four balls in their mouths, so they could load quickly without having to fumble in their bullet-bag.

This soldier has added a plume in red, the traditional Spanish colour, to a 'pork-pie'-shaped cap. In siege conditions he wears – unusually for the shot troops – a cuirass over both a leather jacket and a mail shirt, though he has laid aside his combed morion. The short 'gregüescos', which would continue to be worn during most of the 16th century, evolved from the slashed 'upper stocks' shown on Plate A. Note his sword, musket-rest, and early example of the 'bandolier of charges' (nowadays commonly called 'the twelve apostles', the tubes were in fact of varying numbers).

B2: Officer

Wounded and unable to walk, a Spanish officer sent from Sicily, Capt de Miranda, ordered his men to carry him in a chair to the breach in the ramparts of Fort St Elmo, so that he could die fighting in its final defence on 23 June. Apart from the Order's cross on his breastplate, this reconstruction – based on a portrait of Vincente Anatagi – is typical of officers of the Tercios. The cuirass is blackened to protect it from rust, and worn over a mail shirt; other plates have been removed, and the arming breeches worn beneath have been cut, in order to dress his wound. He would be armed with a sword similar to B3's; a large dagger, for parrying blows in two-handed combat, was commonly carried at the back of the belt. At his feet lies a buckler, by this period generally limited to use in assaults and sieges.

B3: Maestre del campo

The field marshal of the Old Tercio of Sicily, Melchior de Robles, died in the defence of Fort St Michael; we reconstruct this figure after portraits of Emperor Charles V and King Philip II. The typical armour of a wealthy nobleman is blackened and decorated with lavish gilding, and the helmet is an open-faced style giving maximum vision and ventilation. In the summer heat the vambraces have been

removed, and the leg armour is replaced with fine leather boots. The '*gregüescos*' are tucked under at the bottom edge, and 'paned' – cut into vertical strips showing the lining or stuffing between. Note the style of tying the senior officer's sash behind the shoulder, taken from contemporary portraits – in which the shades of red also vary considerably.

(Weapons: Spanish Army Museum, Lázaro Galdiano Museum. Armour: 'The Duke of Alba', Spanish Army Museum; Titian, 'Charles V at the Battle of Mühlberg', and Anthonis Mor, 'Philip II' – Prado Museum. Clothing: Vermeyen, 'The Landing at La Goulette'; Conde de Clonard, *Album de la infantería española*, 1861)

C: LATE 16th CENTURY

C1: Pikeman, Tercio of Juan del Águila;

Cornwall, 1595

This soldier of Capt Amezquita's successful raiding expedition to the south coast of England has armed himself with one of the half-pikes supplied to the galleys. (On its expedition to England in 1588 the Spanish Armada carried 6,000 short pikes for the use of the seamen.) The padded jack was still widely used at sea and in the colonies; otherwise his gear shows his poverty. Note the fairly loose kneebreeches worn in place of the earlier '*gregüescos*', and the red field-sign tied around his arm. (**Background**) Copied from a print of c.1570, this shows a dead man being stripped of his trunk-hose, proving their one-piece construction even at that date.

C2 & C3: Camp follower and boy porter, 'Spanish Road'

The 'public women' and the young servant-boys who followed the army suffered at least as badly as the troops during the long marches across the Alps. The woman's costume is taken from various paintings by Diego Velásques and Bartolomé Murillo. The lad wears a mixture of his own and cast-off clothing, including a jacket with 'lost sleeves'. In hard times the soldiers, too, would be reduced to wearing either espadrilles or simple '*abarcas*' shoes made by hand from strips of leather.

(**Background**) Spanish clothing styles of officers and wealthy soldiers of the late 16th–early 17th centuries, taken from various period paintings and engravings. It is worth noting that one of our main sources for these plates is the artist Carducho, who had a contemporary reputation for showing soldiers on campaign in unrealistically fine dress.

(Jusepe Leonardo, 'The Surrender of Juliers' and 'The Taking of Breisach', and Vicente Carducho, 'The Victory of Fleurus' – all Prado Museum; Sebastien Vranx, 'The Siege of Ostend')

D: 1630s-1650s

D1: Cabo, Battle of Valenciennes, 1658

This hairstyle, quite short but with curling sidelocks, is taken from paintings by Velásques. Squad corporals were distinguished from their men by the *partesana* polearm that they carried; the size and shape of the head seems to have varied. In this case, the corporal also wears a gorget and a red sash over his leather *coleto* jerkin, and his status and relative wealth are indicated by good-quality clothing. The baggy kneebreeches might hang loose, or be tied below the knee with decorative garters – as here. Shoes were not made on left and right lasts, and could be worn on either foot.



A plain example of the 'combed morion' – see Plate B1. In popular imagination this has become a symbol of the Spanish soldier and *conquistador*, but in fact it was widely used in many European armies, and was most typically produced in Italy. The comb served both to reinforce the structure of the helmet and to deflect blows. Men usually wore a headcloth or a cap under their helmets. (Spanish Army Museum)

D2: Musketeer, siege of Ayre, 1641

Musketeers soon abandoned the use of helmets, and from early in the century chose to wear more practical broad-brimmed hats. This man wears a tabard-like *casaca* overjacket with unbuttoned 'lost sleeves' over his doublet, to protect it from the chafing of his belt of charges and other slung gear, with a short cloak thrown back. Two pairs of stockings are worn, with the heavier overstockings folded down. The rest used to support the heavy 'Biscayan' musket when firing was about seven Castilian 'palms' long (4ft 9in/ 1.45m), with a U-shaped bracket ('posadera') at one end and a metal ferrule at the tip ('contera'). From the introduction in the early 17th century of a swivelling pan-cover it was possible to prime the pan before loading the powder and ball into the barrel. However, despite what the instruction manuals of other European nations recommend, this method of loading was not generally used, because the priming could leak from the pan while the weapon was moved about.

D3: Arquebusier

Apart from the cap his basic costume is similar to that of D1, and he carries a lighter firearm and less equipment than D2. The use of field signs on campaign was strictly ordered: 'Not a single soldier, or anyone else, when enemies are on campaign, should walk in the army without a cross or sewn

Reproduction of a mid-17th century royal guardsman of the corps of Archeros de la Cuchilla or Burgundian Archers, with a long-bladed ceremonial polearm.

While much more opulent than the clothing that would be seen on campaign, this costume does give an idea of contemporary styles, including a loose-hanging overjacket with shoulder 'wings' and open split sleeves, worn over the doublet. Nobody really knows if the term 'cassock' – used in several languages all over 17th-century Europe – always meant overjackets similar to this, but it seems plausible. Compare with Plate D2.

(Spanish Army Museum)



red band, under penalty of arbitrary punishment, because those without crosses or sewn bands may surely be spies' (*Sancho de Londoño, Discurso...*). Each arquebusier carried a number of matches, and in battle it was normal to have up to four ends alight at one time; they might go out at inconvenient moments, and it was also common for the match to be blown out of the jaws of the serpentine by the explosive ignition of the priming. (Modern calculations suggest that a Tercio with 1,500 arquebusiers would consume 550lb/ 250kg of match in 24 hours of active service.) Without a belt of charges, he carries his charging and priming powder in two flasks. He still has a sword for hand-to-hand fighting, although the arquebus wielded like a club was a skull-crushing weapon. When committed to a night raid as a 'camisado' – as, for instance, at Mons in 1572 – these light infantrymen might put their white shirt on over the top of the doublet, and sling the sword from shoulder to hip so that it hung higher.

(*Inspección de Infantería, La infantería... . Velásques, 'The Surrender of Breda'; Jusepe Leonardo, 'The Surrender of Juliers', 'The Taking of Breisach', and 'March of Duke of Feria's Troops upon Acqui'; Carducho, 'The Victory of Fleurus'; Zurbarán, 'Defence of Cadiz' – all Prado Museum)*

E: FORMATIONS

E1: Musketeers, Battle of Nordlingen, 1634

After a Swedish advance drove two German mercenary regiments back, the Tercio of Idiaquez, consisting in the great majority of veterans with many years' service, retrieved the day. A 'sleeve' of musketeers was deployed a few score yards ahead to punish the Swedish soldiers with a series of volleys, while the pikemen advanced behind them. Generous intervals were left between files and ranks of shot. The first rank are firing; the second, having reloaded, prepare to replace them; and the third rank – recently the first, until they fell back in orderly manner on the left – are reloading. In this way they achieved a steady succession of volleys that the enemy found demoralizing. (Figures after 'The Taking of Breisach'; that action took place in 1633, and Leonardo's painting was made in 1635.)

E2: Partial section through a tactical squadron, 17th century

For reasons of space this schematic shows only nine ranks of pikemen – there would typically be at least twice as many ranks. The regulation interval at which ranks formed up was one pace, but we may imagine that when it came to 'push of pike' the foremost ranks might have closed up tighter. Here the front three of six ranks of coseletes have lowered their pikes to shoulder height, while the remaining three armoured ranks, and the unarmoured *picas secas* to the rear, wait with grounded pikes. Since the instruction of 1632 reduced the number of pikemen per company to 60, a tactical squadron had to be formed with men from several companies; the flags of all these would be carried by ensigns in the centre of the block in a single rank, with a double interval in front and behind. Immediately ahead of the squadron are a few ranks of arquebusiers, who have fallen back from skirmishing to take shelter under the front ranks of pikes; this could be done all around the pike block.

F: 'PUSH OF PIKE': BATTLE OF HONNECOURT, 1642

In the left background, the young Duke of Albuquerque encourages the final charge that broke the French formation; the standard of his Tercio (left background) would realistically have been further to the rear. It is hard to paint a lifelike impression of the actual clash of two tightly-packed pike blocks. The opposing front ranks, being partly protected by armour, had to stab at each other's faces, throats and thighs, and those on the receiving end had no way to avoid the thrusts. When men fell, their replacement by men from the rank behind – hampered by 16–18ft pikes – must in practice have been more difficult than in the ancient Roman army that was the model for close-order tactics. It seems unlikely that such a confrontation could have lasted many minutes before one side or the other faltered, but it must have been a hideous ordeal while it lasted.

G: THE NINE YEARS' WAR, 1690s–1701

G1: Musketeer, Tercio 'Verdes Viejos'

These figures represent infantrymen late in the reign of King Charles II (r.1665–1701), during which Louis XIV of France successfully defied the Grand Alliance. Although it would only be after Charles's death that the new Bourbon dynasty came to the throne, a strong French influence is already obvious in their clothing. The coat is a French-style

justaucorps, each Tercio by this date wearing a specific colour – in this case, green with white lining. We take the design from the only known original French examples, now in the Swedish Army Museum in Stockholm. The main characteristics are the many small buttons down the front, and the very deep cuffs – turned back permanently, and here showing the tight, buttoned sleeves of a lighter garment worn underneath. The sword hangs from a crossbelt, which would gradually replace the waistbelt. A fashion of this period was – when opportunity offered – to wear the hair longer and curled ('Nazarene style').

G2: Grenadier, Provincial Tercio of Seville

In 1685, four small independent companies of grenadiers were set up on the most likely battlefronts: the Pyrenees frontier, the north of Italy, and Flanders. Each consisted of 50 men, armed with a 'fusil' (lightened arquebus), a plug bayonet so that the firearm could be used like a half-pike, and some primitive grenades. (The general issue of the plug bayonet was not specified by an ordinance until as late as 1702.) In 1701 it was ordered that a 13th, grenadier company be added to each Tercio. Like the rest of his unit this man wears a 'Schomberg'-style slouch hat; the difficulty of throwing grenades while thus encumbered would later lead to the introduction of small 'grenadier caps'. This unit's coat was purple, with red small-clothes. The practical necessity of leaving the coat skirts unbuttoned would lead to the folded-back edges evolving into formal 'facings'.

G3: Pikeman, Tercio 'Colorados Viejos'

With the improvement of the range and accuracy of firearms the use of the pike steadily declined. It was officially abolished altogether in 1702 at the beginning of the War of the Spanish Succession, but militia units probably continued to use it, given their general shortage of weapons. This last of the pikemen still wears a morion and cuirass when there is the prospect of close-quarters fighting, over a French-style coat in the colours of his Tercio.

(José María Bueno Carrera, *Soldados de España*, Almena, 1998)

H: FLAGS

From the reign of Charles I & V, each company had a standard with a distinctive individual design, generally chosen by the company captain; that of the field marshal's company was considered the collective flag of the Tercio. The company standards served as a rallying point in both peace and war, and the soldiers were obliged to hasten to them at the first beat of the drum. The standard was of such importance that 'While his standard was on guard, the captain together with his company was obliged to stay with it by night, to pay it due respect, and he should never fail to do so for any reason' (Martín de Eguiluz, *Milicia...*).

The standards showed a plain red saltire, or a 'ragged' Burgundy Cross in more or less stylized form, on different plain, striped or checkered backgrounds; blues and reds always predominated. This motif was introduced to Spain with the Habsburg prince Philip 'the Handsome', who married the daughter of the Catholic Monarchs to become Philip I of Castile, and fathered the future King Charles I of Spain. The saltire – which was already seen on standards at Pavia in 1525 – symbolizes the cross on which St Andrew was martyred, and the 'ragged' knots reflect a tradition that it was made from cut boughs. There was no fixed convention



Reproduction of an infantry standard, with a 'ragged' red Cross of Burgundy on a white field. Note the painted effect of rough branches, with knots pointing upwards on one and downwards on the other. (Spanish Infantry Academy)

regarding the number, size or placing of the knots. Flags were painted according to the wishes of company captains; there were even examples of crosses of two colours, or of a single diagonal 'ragged branch'. In time, designs became more complex in order to differentiate more standards, but always keeping the saltire – usually, but not invariably, in red. While each of a Tercio's companies had its own standard (and the term *bandera*, 'flag', was synonymous with 'company'), during the 17th century the numbers actually carried into battle dropped, to ensure that these precious trophies did not fall into enemy hands unnecessarily.

H1: Standard with simple saltire without 'knots'; Tunisian campaign, 1535.

H2: Standard used at battle of St Quentin, 1557. Here the 40 knots all point downwards, though the 'cut boughs' should point in opposite directions.

H3: Standard traditionally attributed to the Tercio of Ambrosio Spinola, and as such represented in the painting 'The Surrender of Breda' by Velásques. In fact, that Tercio no longer existed when Breda fell in 1625, since it was dissolved before the Twelve Years' Truce of 1609.

H4: From the reign of Philip III onwards more complicated designs began to be painted on the flags; sometimes religious images were used, frequently representations of the Virgin Mary. In 1632 the order was given to include the image of the Virgin on a red field, although not necessarily on both sides of the flag, while retaining the Cross of Burgundy on a white field on the obverse; this order was cancelled in 1642. This is a reconstruction using the image of the Immaculate Conception painted by Bartolomé Murillo.

H5: Carried at the battle of Rocroi (1643), this complex design incorporates scattered flames, and a Cross of the Order of Alcántara, of which the company captain was clearly a member.

H6: One of the last designs of standard used by the Tercios in 1700; apart from the border it is classically simple. King Philip V's 1707 Ordinance regulating the design of standards retained the Cross of Burgundy.

(H1, 2 & 6: Calvo Pérez & Grávalos González, *Banderas de España*, Silex, Madrid, 1983)

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For Conchi, María, Sara, Carlos, Ana, Daniel, Dad and Mum – and to all Spaniards who since 1492 '*ponen una pica en Flandes'*

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